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# VISIONARY WARFARE:

# BLAKE, HAMANN, AND BOEHME AGAINST IDEOLOGY

A Dissertation

Presented for the

Doctor of Philosophy

Degree

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Dean Wentworth Bethea

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# DEDICATION

To my parents, Nancy and Wentworth Bethea, who taught me the value of experience to be gained both within and without books. And to Professor Jim Colquitt, whose inspiration and confidence in my abilities as a scholar have sustained me since my days as a student in his seminars.

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## ABSTRACT

In my dissertation I seek to extricate and elucidate the fascinating conceptual parallels between the works of William Blake, Johann Georg Hamann, and Jakob Boehme. These radical Christian visionaries evince a social vision which anticipates and parallels major Marxian tenets. I believe their writings are primarily concerned to confront what they perceived as the false, distortive ideologies of their epochs with what might be termed visionary warfare. In my introduction I discuss the various manners in which all three of these visionaries have been wrongly branded as mystics, and stress how antithetical to mysticism their works are. In Chapter II I examine their highly practical, radical conceptions of the creative imagination and its profound transformative powers, powers which they posited in opposition to the superiority accorded to rationalism in their own eras. I then move in Chapter III to an analysis of each writer's attack upon contemporary aesthetic ideologies and the more vibrant formal and stylistic values each proffered as alternatives. In Chapter IV, I show that each author asserted history as a tapestry woven by humanity, and sought to awaken everyone to their necessary role in its making.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

The literary works of William Blake, Johann Georg Hamann, and Jakob Boehme constitute various fibers of a common thread woven through the developing tapestry of Western literature, a thread which binds together modes of thought expressed in differing centuries, languages, and nations. My dissertation will seek to extricate and elucidate the numerous points of connection in these writers' works: however, I will not attempt to smooth over the bristling individuality which characterizes each of these singular authors through a mere reductive compiling of similarities in their thought. I intend to delineate instead the striking parallels evident in their work, which when properly considered, should also describe each writer's emergence from what I perceive to be a central core of visionary thought. Through a politically oriented critical perspective, I hope to combat further the reductiveness sometimes present in comparative studies. I will explore through this approach the ramifications created by these writers' visions of the individual and society, and of the imagination's role as the ultimate mediator between the two. These artists felt themselves

engaged in visionary warfare against the predominant ideologies of their eras. In terms of comparison, the fascinating parallels in their work reveal a continuing stream of anti-ideological thought buried underneath the bedrock of dominant ideologies, during times when "Rationalism," according to many current literary anthologies, was either rapidly on the rise or in total dominance of the intellectual world. That bedrock is rendered porous and permeable, and is finally shattered, by the incisive social vision which Blake, Hamannn, and Boehme possess.

Political criticism is at once, I would argue, among the most useful and potentially damaging of critical perspectives. As studies by Terry Eagleton, Jerome McGann, Fredric Jameson, and many others have shown, a Marxist perspective can do far more than indict any work which does not support the current Marxist party line. Such a perspective may assimilate the incisive strategies of other post-structuralist critical modes--especially those of deconstructive, semiotic, and feminist criticism--and integrate them within a larger social and historical framework. In this manner we may avoid the reductiveness of comments such as Harold Bloom's on "Night the Ninth" of <u>The Four Zoas</u>: "In this passage the political vision of Blake reaches its wishful climax and passes away, to be absorbed into the more strenuous themes

of human reintegration" (BA, p. 268). As if "the process of human reintegration" could be anything but a political one! Similarly, political criticism can assert the reductiveness inherent in an edition such as Josef Simon's of selected works by Hamann entitled J.G. Hamann: Schriften zur Sprache. All literature is inherently social, produced within and conditioned by the political and economic circumstances of a particular historical epoch, and that of Blake, Hamann, and Boehme especially so: their social vision never "passes away" nor may their inclusive works be reduced to one topic such as philology.

Yet despite modern political criticism's heated rejections of earlier "vulgar" Marxism and its supposed infallibility and very real reductiveness, there remains a disturbing tendency among even its most insightful proponents to make sweeping historical generalizations based on insufficient scrutiny of the minute particulars, the highly singular characteristics of the individuals they analyze, forgetting that it is this singularity which makes these individuals worthy of study as much or more so than the ease with which they may be placed into a larger scheme. We encounter this problem in even so insightful a work as David Punter's study of Blake and Hegel, which attempts to trace dialectical thought over the course of centuries. Inclusive and intelligent as this study is, it seriously distorts the thought of both Hamann

and Boehme. Of the former, he argues that "Hamann in a sense shows the danger of a purely subjectivist approach to the problem [of reason versus imagination], in that he sets up the opposition as absolute and does not look for its transcendence in history; in rejecting reason totally, he abandons hope of synthesis and resigns himself to an intuitive mysticism" (p. 180). This assertion is based, judging from Punter's own bibliography, upon a poor translation of a single work of Hamann's, and that one of his very earliest. No further works or critics, in English or German, are consulted.

Many recent German critics of Hamann would be stunned to read such an assertion as Punter's; "purely subjectivist" and "intuitive mysticism" are critical tags which extensive and intensive reading in Hamann would disallow. Punter would have done better to consider Hamann as closely as did Hegel himself, who felt him so important a figure in dialectical thought that he devoted the most extensive review he ever wrote to the first edition of Hamann's collected works. In the course of my own work I will attempt to refute Punter's view and his equally distorted reading of Boehme. Yet more harmful than the mere inaccuracy of such uninformed assertions is the critical arrogance which underlies them and makes them possible, an arrogance which still seems to loom in disturbingly large proportions over modern political

criticism. Political criticism is clearly among the most viable and insightful literary theories available to us, yet we must never, in attempting to gain an inclusive dynamic vision of literature, murder the irrefutable individualities of those who create literature in order to dissect the meaning and historical position of their work. A larger sense of historical process and progress is vital to any meaningful critical study, but this perspective can never be achieved by improper and insufficient scrutiny of the individuals who produce that history. To do so is not only to commit a grievous critical injustice but also to approach with a distressing proximity the disregard for the individual evinced by so many "Marxist" governments today.

Political criticism can be especially effective in probing the ways in which literature consciously confronts dominant ideology and unconsciously reproduces it. Ideology is of course a particularly complex concept, and its exact definition varies widely in recent Marxist criticism. Yet despite that variance, there is a specific conceptual area which the term "ideology" covers, an area concisely explained by Raymond Williams' three-part definition:

> i). A system of beliefs characteristic of a particular class or group;
> ii). a system of illusory beliefs--false ideas or false consciousness--which can be contrasted with true or scientific knowledge;

> iii). the general process of the production of meanings and ideas.
> Sense [iii] undercuts most of these associations and distinctions, for the ideological process--the production of meanings and ideas--is then seen as general and universal, and ideology is either this process itself or the area of its study. Positions associated with senses [i] and [ii] are then brought to bear in Marxist ideological studies. (p. 55)

From Lukacs to Eagleton, most important recent works in Marxist critical theory and practice, although each may stress particularly the importance of one of the definitions here, evince general agreement with Williams' articulation of the varied nature of ideology. The works of Blake, Hamann, and Boehme are basically concerned to confront the dominant, distortive ideologies of their epochs, and the processes which produce and perpetuate those ideologies, with visionary warfare. Their works seek to eradicate those systems of illusory beliefs, false ideas, false consciousness, which veil the real workings of corrupt social structures, to contrast and replace them with the "true knowledge" of what Blake termed "Sweet Science." Yet their totalizing alternatives to rationalist dogma do retain unconsciously--to borrow terms from Macherey--aspects of the ideologies they consciously attacked. Micheal Ferber has accurately pointed out that "even works deliberately critical of prevailing ideologies and alert to their social bases...project an anti-ideological viewpoint that is in itself partly

ideological" (p. 8). I would agree; yet the extent to which these three artists' thought remains free of the taint of prevailing ideologies makes the viability and incisiveness of their own radical social critiques even more remarkable. My study is an attempt to delineate those radical critiques as accurately and extensively as possible, to reveal the tactics by which these prophets executed their visionary warfare, the specific cultural and social targets which that warfare is aimed at, and finally, to indicate the type of victories they hoped to achieve thereby. Their visions of a totally egalitarian, dynamic heaven achievable here and now upon this earth, of a social world shaped and charged by the visionary imagination represent original and, in their view, highly practical alternatives to the squalor and injustice they saw all around them.

Boehme, a cobbler born in Altseidenberger at the close of the sixteenth century, was largely self-educated. However, his intense spiritual vision needed no instruction, and as a young boy he apprehended startling visions, as the young Blake would over a century later: once while at play with some other boys in the country Boehme entered a cave in a mountainside alone and there beheld piles of golden coins, treasure which had unfortunately disappeared upon his return with his friends. Boehme interpreted this vision as a divine

message informing him that he must use his own imaginative insight to pierce the external veil of natural reality covering all phenonmena in this world in order to perceive the spiritual reality beneath (Grunsky, p. 17). Boehme devoted himself to this task for the rest of his life, writing in whatever time he had free from his cobbling, turning out a huge body of work, despite a decree banning him from writing any further after he was persecuted for supposed heresies found by the authorities, led by one Pastor Richter, in his Aurora: oder Morgenroete im Aufgang. Richter was enraged almost to the point of literal insanity towards Boehme and persecuted him during a life-long obsession with the cobbler, thus indicating the threat which his incisive vision represented to organized religion, and thereby the very core of Renaissance society, based upon an unholy alliance of the church and feudal aristocracy. Boehme's writings articulate a complex vision the foundation of which I must seek to at least outline before proceeding.

Boehme was compelled to write his Aurora, as well as the many volumes which followed it, because, as he put it, "Ich aber befand, dass in allen Dingen Boeses and Gutes war..." (quoted in Grunsky, p. 15).[1] And this brief assertion goes quite some distance in clarifying Boehme's basic position: in all phenomena in our universe there

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[1]"I found that in all things exist evil and good."

dwell two "Willen" or wills, one striving towards good ("das Gute"), the other towards evil ("das Boese"). These terms have many apposites in the world; the will which compels us toward the good seeks to be reunified in the divine essence which is God, a portion of which is present in every individual human breast. This task can only be effected by constant "ringen" or wrestling with the will to evil, which desires to remain mired in the false world of external nature ("die Natur"). "Ringen" is certainly the most crucial operative word in Boehme's vocabulary. An apprehension of the human essence which unites us all can never be achieved by passive contemplation but only by active perception, the daily pursuit of the visionary warfare necessary to eradicate the destructive "Selbheit" or selfhood which seeks to annihilate the vital bonds of spiritual brotherhood. God is not some distant patriarch looking on his creation with self-righteous anger: we are God, as the incarnation of Christ proves for Boehme, and heaven is within ourselves, clearly visible if we would only look with the divine imaginative vision available to us all. When and if we do achieve this vision of our own divinity, then a third identity is achieved, one in which the two wills are reconciled and contained within a larger sphere, the dynamic whole of the transformed humanity that is the only heaven Boehme allows, as the following crucial

quote from his Vom irdischen und himmlischen Mysterium evinces:

> So denn also von Ewigkeit zwei Wesen [geistliches und essentialisches] sind gewesen, so koennen wir nicht sagen, dass eines neben dem anderen stehe und eine Trennung sei. Nein, sondern also erkennen wir, dass das Geist-leben in sich hinein gewandt stehet, und das Naturleben aus sich und bevor sich stehet. Da wirs dann zusammen einem runden Kugel-raede vergleichen, das auf allen Seiten gehet, wie das Rad in Ezechial andeutet.... In welchem Begehren das goettliche Wesen, als ewige Wort und Herz Gottes, immer und von Ewigkeit erboren wird, von dem der begehrende Wille ewig ausgehet, als sein Geist in das Naturleben, und eroeffnet darinnen das Mysterium aus den Essentien und in den Essentien, dass also zwei Leben sind, und auch zwei Wesen, aus und in einem einigen, ewige ungruendliche Urstaende. (P IV, 100-101, Chapter 4.8-5.1)[2]

This is only one reference from Boehme's complex and challenging system of thought, but it will serve as a starting point; the use of Ezekiel's wheel as a model for the divine sphere of recombinant humanity should be startling enough to anyone familiar with Blake's major

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[2]Since then, from eternity there have been two essences [spiritual and essential], we cannot say that one stands next to another or that there is a separation. No, we rather recognize that the life of the spirit stands turned inwards upon itself, and that the life of nature stands outside and before itself. Hence we can compare it with a spherical wheel, which rolls on all sides, as the wheel in Ezekiel signifies. In which desire the godly essence, as the eternal word and heart of God, is born anew and from eternity, from which emanates eternally the desirous will, as its Spirit into the life of nature, and opens therein the mystery out of the essential and in the essential, so that there thus exist two lives, and also two essences, out of and within a united, eternal, ungrounded original condition.

prophecies, most specifically The Four Zoas, in which the Hebrew prophet's vision of wheels within a wheel is used as a symbol for the fully reintegrated four-fold human. Unfortunately, Boehme, like Blake, has frequently been dismissed as mystic because of the complexity of his thought and also because of his frequent use of the word in his writings and even in his titles, as in his Mysterium Magnum. I think this term has been misapplied to his work, ignoring the sense in which he used it, and I believe Northrop Frye's defense of Blake from the same charges can be cited on Boehme's behalf:

> 'Mysticism,' when the word is not simply an elegant variant of 'misty' or 'mysterious,' means a certain kind of religious technique difficult to reconcile with anyone's poetry. It is a form of spiritual communication with God which is by its nature incommunicable to anyone else, and which soars beyond faith into direct apprehension. But to the artist, qua artist, this apprehension is not an end in itself but a means to another end, the end of producing his poem.... Most of the poets generally called mystics might better be called visionaries, which is not quite the same thing.... A visionary creates, or dwells in, a higher spiritual world in which the objects of perception in this one have become transfigured and charged with a new intensity of symbolism.... It is a perceptive rather than a contemplative attitude of mind: but most of the great mystics, St. John of the Cross and Plotinus for instance, the symbolism of visionary experience is not only unnecessary but a positive hindrance to the highest mystical contemplation. This suggests that mystics and art are in the long run mutually exclusive, but that the visionary and the artist are allied. (FS, 7-8)

This assertion should also be applied to Boehme, an artist who chose to articulate his visions in prose imbued with "the symbolism of visionary experience." The absolute and constant emphasis upon the utter necessity of "ringen" in his work separates Boehme from the esoteric realms of "misty" mysticism. Moreover, Boehme himself distances his work from those realms through the consistent and highly qualified sense in which he uses the word "Mysterium" and its variants. "Das Mysterium aus den Essentien und in den Essentien" is not some secret knowledge available only to esoteric divines but nothing more than the "Wille," empowered by the imagination, which leads us inward to our own esential unity with God, then again outwards to the material, social reality we are now empowered to transmogrify positively. And again there is no better place to turn in Boehme's defense than his own writings, in this instance Von sechs mystischen Punkten:

> Magia ist die Mutter der Ewigkeit, des Wesens aller Wesen denn sie macht sich selber; und wird in der Begierde verstanden. Sie ist in sich selber nichts als nur ein Wille; und derselbe Wille ist das groesste 'MYSTERIUM' aller Wunder und Heimlichkeit und fuehret sich aber durch die Imagination des begierigen Hungers in Wesen.... 'MYSTERIUM' ist anders nichts, als der magische WILLE, der in der Begierde stecket.... Denn 'MYSTERIUM MAGNUM' ist nichts als die Verborgenheit der Gottheit.... (P, IV, 5.1-6.1, 93-96)[3]

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[3]Magic is the mother of eternity, of the essence of all essences, because she creates herself; and becomes

Thus we see that Boehme uses the word "Mysterium" in a highly qualified--and simplified--sense: the greatest mystery which our universe holds is nothing more than God's concealed nature, a concealment that can be pierced, utterly removed not by sporadic rapture but only through the daily "Ringen," the exercising of our magic will ("magischer Wille"), the divine imagination inherent in us all but unheeded by too many. This imaginative faculty hungers after the organic "Wesen" or essential unity of the organic whole that is the true God, who is the ultimate human entity, a reassembly of the disparate individuals alienated from that unity at the fall. This is the only sense in which Boehme ever refers to mysticism or spiritual mysteries. Thus to relegate him to the realms of true mystics such as Plotinus or St. John of the Cross, who evince a radically different conception of God and how humanity may approach him, reveals a basic misunderstanding of his essential thought. The cobbler's vast body of work is an intense testament to his constant exhortations that we must use our "umgewandte Augen," the transformed visionary eyes which can penetrate easily the

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understandable in desire. She is herself nothing other than a will; and the same will is the greatest MYSTERY of all wonders and secretiveness. It goes through the imagination of desirous hunger into the essence.... MYSTERY is nothing other than the magic WILL, which is contained in desire.... Because MYSTERIUM MAGNUM is nothing but the sequestration of the Godhead.

only mystery before us--the godhead that infuses us all. Hence Boehme's own work clearly refutes the main assertions of a study such as Stoudt's, unfortunately one of the few this century devoted exclusively to this writer. Stoudt maintains that

> Closing his eyes and mouth, as mysticism originally suggests, [Boehme] was led to penetrate beyond the breach between man and woman, between creed and creed, God and the world.... (p. 300)

As we have seen, nothing could be more misleading concerning Boehme's thought: it was precisely by opening his eyes, the transformed ("umgewandten") orbs, and mouth to the world of the natural and entering into visionary warfare with that world that he achieved this vision and articulated it so forcefully and precisely. Stoudt's assertion recalls Blake's parody of mere contemplation divorced from external reality in An Island in the Moon, where "Obtuse Angle [is] shutting his eyes & saying that he always understood better when he shut his eyes."[4] We can discern from the character's name what Blake thought of such abstracted contemplation, and his indictment here is fully in keeping with Boehme's own rejection of veiled mysticism.

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[4]The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake, ed. David V. Erdman, New York: Anchor Books, (1982). All further references to Blake's work will be taken from this text.

By asserting Boehme as a true visionary I do not mean to ignore the occasional--some would say frequent--difficulty of his work, which can become bogged down in a morass of alchemical and astrological symbols no modern critic has been able to decipher adequately. But to dismiss these difficulities as the effusions of a mystical humbug, a willful obscurantist, is surely inaccurate. I will deal with these difficulties in the course of my study, but suffice it to say here that Boehme's use of the esoterica of alchemy and astrology is based upon a very simple, yet profound, assertion: the myriad metals which inhabit our substrata, the innumerable stars which hang in our stratosphere, center on the divine sun of transformed humanity. These crude elements and astrological entities are manifestations of the basic spiritual gold from which all natural phenomena spring. Boehme underscores his essential disagreement with true alchemists and astrologists in a telling passage from the Morgenroethe:

> Du darfst mich darum fuer keinen Alchimisten halten: denn ich schreibe allein in Erkenntnis des Geistes....denn ich brauche nicht ihre Formula and Art, weil ich von ihnen nichts gelernt habe: sondern habe einen andern Lehrmeister, welcher ist die ganze Natura. (112)[5]

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[5]You cannot for this reason think me an alchemist, because I write solely in the knowledge of the spirit.... because I have no use for their formulae and types, since I have learned nothing from them. Rather I have another mentor, which is all of Nature.

Born in Koenigsberg in 1730, the son of the city bather, Hamann was also largely self-educated, leaving college after several years without a degree. But his self-education continued intensely, thanks to several positions which he obtained as tutor to households with well-equipped libraries. The result was that Hamann truly became one of the most widely read men of his generation, teaching himself English, Spanish, Italian, and Hebrew: he had had a fluent grasp of Greek and Latin since boyhood. The combination of this powerfully developed mind with his rather humble beginnings produced an intellectual audacity which contrasted with his personal humility: the Hamann who grapples fiercely with the literary establishment of the Enlightenment contrasts greatly with the Hamann who says that he reveres his father's municipal bathtub as Socrates did his mother's footstool. Hamann entered into the business of his close friend Johann Christoph Berens; his new employment took him to England, where he continued his heretofore largely profligate lifestyle. Then in 1757 he suffered a spiritual crisis, brought on by the failure of his assigned undertakings there and by the discovery that his roommate was being supported financially by a wealthy businessman. From this crisis, which led him to a rediscovery of the Bible, was born the radical Christianity that would imbue all his work. From this point on, he rejected his own

"Enlightened" education for a highly original Christian perspective whose complexity, and the ornately chaotic style which he employed to articulate it, earned much the same critical derision that Boehme's "mysticism" had.

Hamann, whose basic authorial stance was ever one of direct confrontation and contradiction of the staid literary norms of his day, also led a life which boldly contradicted his era's social mores: child of a lower class family, he became perhaps the most broadly read scholar of his age, which was that of Lessing and Kant; an initially staunch adherent of the Enlightenment's basic tenets, he went on to become that rationalist movement's most tenacious and incisive opponent. As a self-professed Christian, he joined in a lifelong relationship, unsanctioned by the church or civil law, with Anna Regina Schumacher, formerly a maid in his father's house, that he described as "a marriage of conscience" from which four children were born. Forced by economic necessity to accept a job, arranged by Kant, as a customs official for the government of King Friedrich of Prussia, he became one of that government's sharpest critics, attacking the King himself in works such as "Salomon au Prusse." A father-figure for his close friend Herder, and an important influence for the Sturm und Drang movement as a whole, he was also simultaneously Herder's--and the movement that he inspired--most vehement enemy, attacking

Herder's work in various publications of his own, just as he attacked his friend Kant. Thus Hamann's actual life, unlike those of many literary figures, embodies his own religious, aesthetic, historical, sexual and political convictions, and his work anticipates as well Blake's assertion that "Opposition is true friendship."

Both Hamann and Boehme, by reason of their common nationality, have been even more frequently lumped together and dismissed as rapturous babblers than have Boehme and Blake, as the following quote from a contemporary review of Hamann's Sokratische Denkwuerdigkeiten attests: "No alchemist, no Jakob Boehme, no insane fanatic can speak and write more senseless and unintelligible stuff than what we have to read here" (Hamburgische Nachrichten, quoted in Alexander, p. 51). Recent critics of Hamann have sought to rescue his work from distorted critical perspectives, yet the revision of such perspectives necessary is far from complete. I will assert that Hamann is a seer whose exaltation of the visionary powers is firmly rooted in the physical senses. Understandably, recent critics have also sought to distance Hamann from the "mystic" Boehme, largely because of their basic misunderstanding of the latter's works. So the familiar critical syndrome of dismissing as incoherent any literature not immediately translucent has ironically claimed another victim.

I believe that the writings of Hamann and Boehme clearly evince striking conceptual parallels. Hamann, as I have argued for Boehme, is no mystic in any sense of that word, as Joergensen has argued convincingly:

> Hamann gibt keineswegs in einem mystischen Erlebnis seinen empirischen Ausgangspunkt preis, sondern verbindet diesen mit dem biblischen Gedanken der Verkuendigung und grenzt sich sowohl von der Mystik als auch von der natuerlichen Religion ab. (Hamann, p. 30)[6]

This asseveration of Hamann's non-mystical yet radically Christian prophetic stance is supported by a famous passage from Brocken:

> Was fuer ein Magazin macht die Geschichte der Gelehrsamkeit aus! Und worauf gruendet sich alle? Auf fuenf Gerstenbrodte, auf fuenf Sinne, die wir mit den unvernunftigen Thieren gemeinschaftlich besitzen. Nicht nur das ganze Waarhaus der Vernunft sondern selbst die Schatzkammer des Glaubens beruhen auf diesem Stock. Unsere Vernunft ist jenem blinden thebarischen Wahrsager aehnlich, dem seine Tochter Manto den Flug der Voegel beschrieb; er prophezeyte aus ihren Nachrichten. Der Glaube, sagt der Apostel, kommt durch's Gehoer des Wortes Gottes. Rom. X.17. Geht, und sagt Johannes wieder, uns Ihr hoeret und sehet. Matth. XI.4. (NI, p. 298)[7]

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[6]"Hamann in no way abandons his empirical point of departure in a mystical experience, but rather combines this point of departure with a biblical idea of prophecy and thus distances himself from mysticism as well as natural religion."

[7]What a storehouse the history of scholarship makes! And upon what is all this grounded? Upon five barley breads, upon five senses, which we possess in common with unreasoning animals. Not only the entire warehouse of Reason but even the treasure room of Faith rests upon this foundation. Our reason is comparable to the blind soothsayer of Thebes, whose daughter Manto

Here Hamann abjures both the gossamer webs of mysticism and the restrictive limits of rationalism, the human faculty worshipped by the cognoscenti of the Enlightenment, blazing his own intellectual trail to God, one marked by the signposts of faith. Yet he does not, in contrast to Punter's assertions, reject reason categorically: our rational powers are vital but dependent upon the "Nachrichten," the messages delivered to us by our faith and our imaginative vision.

William Blake, born in London in 1757, was apprenticed to be an engraver as a boy; he educated himself as far as literature is concerned, and indeed was thankful that he had not been subjected to the deforming strictures of organized education. Blake, like Boehme and Hamann, never earned a living solely from the production of his own works, although his radically innovative form of engraving, and the art he produced from it, were inseparable from his poetic expression. His "illuminated books," which he engraved and colored himself with assistance from his wife, synthesize the glory of medieval printing, positing the vigor and energy of Gothic art against the moribund but firmly entrenched remnants of the neoclassical era in England. Blake's fervent outcries

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described the flight of the birds to him; he prophesied from her reports. Faith, says the apostle, comes through hearing the Word of God. Romans, X:17. And furthermore John said, Go, so you may hear and see us. Matthew XI:4.

against the evils of organized religion and a corrupt empire, his insistence that the only true God resides in the human breast, that he could touch heaven with his walking stick, earned him, predictably, the same hostile derision and scorn with which Boehme and Hamann met.

Blake's admitted debt to Boehme has been frequently alluded to but never fully explored. That he read and admired Boehme is evident in both his works and letters, where he refers to the German visionary several times: in the Marriage of Heaven and Hell, one of Blake's most raucously radical early works, he asserts that any one

> of mechanical talents may from the writings of Paracelsus or Jacob Behmen, produce ten thousand volumes of equal value with Swedenborg's. and from those of Dante or Shakespear, an infinite number. But when he has done this, let him not say that he knows better than his master, for he only holds a candle in sunshine. (p. 43)

And in a letter to John Flaxman dated 12 September 1800, Blake averred that "Paracelsus & Behmen appeard to me. terrors appeard in the Heaven above and in Hell beneath & a mighty & awful change threatend the Earth" (708). However, despite such references most recent criticism has striven, it seems, to deny any and all parallels between the two authors. Perhaps this tendency is understandable in mid-century criticism, when critics such as Frye were forced to combat very real and vastly inaccurate attitudes in the literary establishment which dismissed the

difficulties and challenges of Blake's major works as the effusions of a mystic clearly incapable of delineating his glimpses of the divine.

However, if once understandable this tendency is now inexcusable and has indeed led to a critical distortion itself, an opposite extreme perhaps best exemplified by Harold Bloom's assertion that "Blake read little with any care besides the Bible and Milton; he is not likely to have derived anything really central to him from ancient philosophy, or from the theosophy of the Cabala or Boehme" (BA, 77). Blake is undoubtedly one of the most intensely independent and original of all English poets, but to assert that he read "little with any care besides the Bible and Milton" borders on the absurd: Blake also manifests one of the greatest assimilative and syncretic minds in literature; as Erdman in Prophet Against Empire has shown, Blake drew from sources as diverse as the Norse Prose Eddas, Celtic mythology and the daily news. Blake surely read almost everything that came before him with the greatest care, and his own remarkably diverse mythology and vibrant annotations on other writers' works evince beyond any doubt that he was a voracious and close reader.

Yet Bloom and others also seek to dismiss even Blake's open acknowledgements of Boehme's importance. Referring to the above quote from The

Marriage, Bloom asserts that Blake "rejected Swedenborg, Behmen, and Paracelsus" there (429), and moreover that

> This little passage not only dismisses Swedenborg and all systematic reasoners in spiritual matters with him, but quietly implies a truth about Blake that many of is more esoteric scholars might have pondered; Dante and Shakespeare are valued infinitely above the theosophists Paracelsus and Boehme, for the great poets are a sunshine in which any mystical writer is only a candle. (BA, p. 94)

Beyond the obvious oversight of the systematic qualities of Blake's spiritual thought, this is an exaggerated misreading. Blake clearly devalues Swedenborg, but simultaneously affirms Boehme, from whose works any man of even mechanical--not mystical--talents may produce myriad volumes equal with the Swedish mystic's. Furthermore, Blake asserts that after one has done this--emulated Boehme--"let him not say that he knows better than his master" for he has only lit a candle in the sunshine of spiritual truth. But the crux of this passage avers a crucial Blakean point: to true visionaries such works only illuminate an already apparent reality, yet the mass of humanity lead lives of willful darkness, blind to the light of the divine vision. Certainly for Blake, Dante and Shakespeare are greater lights than Boehme or Paracelsus, but the latter are yet sparks of the collective flame of visionary literature. Such writers

cannot claim they are better than their "master," the Poetic Genius, the creative imagination which was the only master Blake ever acknowledged, in the fashion of the mystic who claims his rarified visions are restricted to only a limited number of blessed seers. We are all blessed with the gift of apprehending the spiritual sunlight which blazes unperceived around us, and the works of Boehme and Paracelsus can point us towards what ideally should already be apparent.

This affirmation of Boehme is strengthened by the reference in Blake's letter mentioned above, which is conveniently overlooked by Bloom and those less "esoteric" critics who would deny any and all parallels between the two writers. Immediately prior to this reference to Boehme and Paracelsus in the letter, Blake again aligns them with Shakespeare, who "in riper years gave me his hand"; then the two philosophers appeared to him and "terrors appear'd in the Heavens above and in Hell beneath & a mighty & awful change threaten'd the earth." Such a comment is the highest possible comment an author can be paid by Blake, when it is properly understood in terms of his own thought. For Blake the "heaven above" is only the false abstraction created by organized religion, the distant god of wrath who exists only in the manufactured delusions of the church and state. The "Hell beneath" is the corporeal world enslaved by belief in such a false

heaven, a world populated by humans who ignore the true heaven within their breasts. The tripartite appearance of Shakespeare, Boehme, and Paracelsus causes "terrors" to appear in both the false heaven and hell created and perpetuated by religious and political despots, the truths of their spiritual intensity searing these established distortions--this is the ultimate goal of all true art for Blake, which by definition must be visionary. Such works, when perceived from a proper perspective, can effect radical changes in the structures of our existence, changes which are threatening only to those tyrants whose interests are directly tied to their continuance. Thus Blake considers his own thought to be essentially aligned with that of Boehme, whom he obviously read with great care, and whom he hardly "rejected."

But I am more concerned with the fascinating possibilities raised by the intertextual parallels here than with "proving" any direct influences between Boehme, Hamann, and Blake. Merely the remarkable similarity of critical thought concerning Blake and Hamannn, who certainly never were aware of each other's work or existence, suggests the possibility of profound conceptual parallels in their work. That these possible parallels have never been examined in more than the most cursory fashion by only a handful of critics is amazing: both men were aware of Boehme, both held the Bible as the most

valuable document available to humanity, but interpreted it in a manner which earned them relative obscurity, excoriation when any critic happened to devote a line to their work, and, periodically, abject poverty. An intensive exploration of these parallels seems long overdue. Perhaps one reason for the absence of such a study can be attributed to the stylistic difficulties of Hamann's works, widely considered by German scholars to be the most difficult in that language. It has certainly led those few students of English literature who have attempted to deal with him to rely upon the very few translations which exist of his work. In any case, there seems to be a kind of destructive critical chain reaction at work in studies of Boehme, Hamann, and Blake, with champions of each condemning the other writers as mystics or inferior artists in attempts to clear their own chosen topics of such charges. Such attempts create a vicious circle of scholarship which leads nowhere in further illuminating the issues at hand.

It is these issues which I plan to explore throughout my study. I will consistently assert that these writers are visionaries as opposed to mystics, men of profound social vision who believed their own writings could and should have profound and immediate influence upon their own societies. In the course of my study I will examine these authors' conceptions of the imagination, a faculty

which for them possesses radically transformative powers, capable of penetrating the veil of nature and apprehending the divine essence beneath. This faculty is not impractical or ethereal, as it may at first glance appear. Rather it is for all three men inherently practical and social, based in experiential existence and closely aligned with sexual energy. Its primary function was to alter profoundly the shape of the world around us, to ideate the finite while simultaneously realizing the concrete which imbues the infinite, to borrow Hegelian terms. Their conceptions of the imagination closely approximate, as I will indicate later, Marx's ideas concerning the powers of the process of creative thought practically applied to the material world, powers finally far more vital to any meaningfully restructured society than the strange brand of ill-defined rationalism worshipped by so many Marxists today. I will also comment at length on what Boehme, Hamann, and Blake perceived as the destructive autonomy given to the reasoning faculties over the redemptive imagination in their respective epochs.

We have already seen above how Boehme accorded the imaginative vision a transfiguring potency; he posited this potency against the relative weakness of reason. In his seminal work Das umgewandte Auge (The Transformed Eye), he asserts, in a manner strikingly anticipatory of

Blake, that the soul is the instrument of eternal vision, that "Diese Seele ist ein Auge in dem ewigen Ungrunde: ein Gleichnis der Ewigkeit" (p. 298).[8] The "Ungrund" is Boehme's own innovative coinage of a conception we would term the void, the abyss of absolute nothingness. That the transformed eye is empowered by the imaginative powers is asserted further in Von sechs mystischen Punkten:

> Die Imagination... findet sich in allen Dingen; denn sie ist das groesste Wesen in der Gottheit; sie fuehret den Abgrund in Grund, das Nichts in Etwas.... Es ist dem Menschen hochnot, dass er stets wider die irdische Vernunft im Fleisch und Blut streite.... (Ibid, 5.10, 94)[9]

But Boehme does not totally reject logic; instead he defines the true rationality as "Verstaendnis" or understanding, the matrix in which all imaginatively perceived phenomena must be reposited. This form-giving "Verstaendnis" enables the destruction of what Boehme termed the "Selbheit" or selfhood that obstructs our awareness of our essential unity with each individual human. This is the term, as Ferber notes, from which Blake derived his own central notion of the "Selfhood,"

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[8]"This soul is an eye in the eternal void: an image of eternity."

[9]The imagination is found in all things; because it is the greatest essence in the Godhead; it transforms the abyss into solid ground, nothing into something.... It is of the utmost importance to man that he struggle always against the earthly reason in flesh and blood.

which corresponds in conceptual import with Boehme's "Selbheit" (p. 34).

Boehme, living in the twilight of the Renaissance, saw the birth of the rational empiricism which had become predominant by Hamann's time. As we have seen, Hamann rejected that philosophy's privileging of reason as violently as he did the vague intuition of mysticism, erecting, in astonishing similarity with Blake, the "poetisches Genie" as the perceptive faculty most central to humanity. In opposition to natural religion's emphasis upon experiment and abstract generalizations he asserted the prime factor of faith in true divinity, a God whose essence yet resides within any person who will seek it. His attack on earthly reason in Gedanken ueber meinen Lebenslauf is particularly pointed and thus illustrative of his attitude:

> Alles was der irrdischen Vernunft unwahrscheinlich und laecherlich vorkommt, ist den Christen unumgaenglich und unwiderleglich gewiss und troestlich. Was die Vernunft unterdrueckt und verzweifelt und verzagt macht, richtet uns auf und macht uns stark in Gott. (N , p. 46)[10]

But, as we have seen, Hamann's perception of the infinite is firmly grounded in the five senses, which,

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[10]Everything which strikes earthly reason as improbable and laughable is to Christians inevitably and irrefutably certain and comforting. Whatever reason suppresses and makes despairing and despondent, lifts us up and makes us strong in God.

although we share them with unreasoning animals, contain what Blake would call the "chief inlets of the soul" in this age. Guided by the dictates of faith and the striving after the infinity of God within ourselves, the senses for Hamann can be instrumental in forming from the stimuli of the natural world a viable vision of the recombinant humanity which is God. Our perceptive faculties alone are clearly not enough, but they are clearly essential for apprehending God. Thus what Punter falsely indicts as Hamann's "intuitive mysticism," his supposedly rapturous solipsism, is firmly grounded in the physical world, rendered concrete through the five senses.

For Blake the Poetic Genius corresponds to the creative imagination--a power which is quite simply the most essential in his philosophy. He described the nature of this faculty in a famous passage that resonates of Boehme's Das umgewandte Auge:

> What it will be Questioned when the Sun rises do you not see a round disk of fire somewhat like a Guinea O no no I see an Innumerable company of the Heavenly host crying Holy Holy Holy is the Lord God Almighty I question not my Coporeal or Vegetative Eye any more than I would Question a Window concerning a Sight I look thro it & not with it. (p. 56)

Blake contrasts the intensity of this imaginative vision, the radical extent to which it manifests, through the ideation of objective phenomena, the unity of the Human Form Divine, with the weakness of reason even more

vehemently than does Hamann or Boehme. Like Boehme and Hamann, Blake does not, however, reject reason or logic categorically but rather the singularly privileged status this faculty had attained during the Enlightenment and Augustan periods in Europe and England. Reason is only tyrannical when it dominates the other faculties with which it should be rightly integrated; united with these other faculties--sexual energy, the form-giving instincts, and above all the Poetic Genius--it obtains status very similar to Boehme's "Verstaendnis," a means of comprehension never meant to be primary but rather an aid to the creative imagination, a means of further elucidating and delineating the intensity of vision which our unleashed imaginative powers bring to us. Humanity restricted to its reasoning powers is capable of perceiving only the "Ratio," a rigid mathematical equation of similarities, incapable of apprehending the minute particulars, the myriad disparate units of natural phenomena which, when properly perceived and reassembled by the imagination, constitute the Human Form Divine, the only god Blake acknowledges--we are the atoms which compose this entity. And Blake's literature is rife with incisive indictments of those who worship Urizen's fallen reason.

Because Boehme, Hamann, and Blake thus battled vehemently against pure rationalism, the concept of

visionary warfare is centrally important in understanding their work. All three saw their work simultaneously as imaginative opposition to the rationalists of their day and as continuing documents of their own attempts to push the light of the divine vision further against the darkness of spiritual--and thus social--ignorance. Boehme terms his brand of visionary warfare "Ringen," as noted above, the imaginative wrestling against "die tote Vernunft" or dead reason and the "Selbheit," a struggle every human must undertake in order to reach a true comprehension of the god who dwells within us. Blake most frequently terms his similar version of this "Ringen" "Mental Fight," the intellectual strife which advances the perception of the infinity within us; this activity is diametrically opposed to the "Strife of Blood" which he denounces at the end of his Europe: A Prophecy, The Four Zoas, and elsewhere. Hamann's radicalization of the Enlightenment rationalism which formed his early thought is well described by Joergensen:

> Hamanns Voraussetzungen waren die der Aufklaerung. Ausgangspunkt fuer ihn wie fuer die spaete Aufklaerung, die die grossen metaphysischen Systeme des 17. Jhs. ablehnte, war die kritische Selbstbesinnung des Menschen. Pope drueckte die Tendenz des Jahrhunderts aus mit seinem "The proper study of mankind is man"; Humes radikale Skepsis weckte Kant aus seinem "dogmatischen Schlummer" und fuehrte zu einer kritischen Bestimmung der Vernunft. Hamann radikalisierte diesen allgemeinen Ansatz, indem er in der 'Hoellenfahrt der Selbsterkenntnis' nach seiner eigenen Tugend und seiner eigenen

> Vernunft fragte, nicht nach DER Tugend, der allgemeinen gesunden Vernunft und einer allgemeinen Lehre vom Wesen des Menschen. So entdeckte Hamann, dass Selbsterkenntnis konkret in einem Individuum zu leisten ist, das durch Abhaengigkeit allerlei Art bedingt ist... und ist am radikalisten in seiner ganzen Existenz abhaengig von Gott. (Hamann, p. 36)[11]

Here we can see just how far Hamann's thought actually is from the "intuitive mysticism" of which Punter accuses him; as a seminal transitional figure between German Enlightenment literature and that of the incipient Sturm und Drang movement, he assimilates the overly general rationalism and "virtue" of his neoclassical contemporaries and radicalizes them, grounding these supposedly "objective" concepts in the "minute particulars" of the individual consciousness, seeking particular truths, truths which cannot be simply abstracted away from the individuals who manifest them.

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[11]Hamann's presuppositions were those of the Enlightenment. The point of departure for him as for the late Enlightenment, which rejected the great metaphysical systems of the seventeenth century, was the critical self-reflection of the human. Pope expressed the tendency of the century with his "The proper study of mankind is man"; Hume's radical skepticism woke Kant from his "dogmatic slumber" and led to definition of reason. Hamann radicalized this general beginning, from which he sought, through the "journey to hell of self-knowledge," his own virtue and his own reason, not THE virtue, general reason or a generalized lesson from the essence of humanity. Thus Hamann discovered that self-knowledge can be achieved concretely in the individual, who is conditioned by dependences of many types... the most radical of which is the dependence of his entire existence upon God.

In a manner highly reflective of Boehme's "ringen" and Blake's "Mental Fight" Hamann asserts that such truths can only be ascertained through a "journey into hell," an intellectual and spiritual struggle with the dark borders of self-knowledge. The illumination of these various individual borders will in turn reveal more clearly the divine body politic which is God. This central concept is delineated further by Hamann in Zweifel und Einfaelle ueber eine vermischte Nachricht der allgemeinen Deutschen Bibliothek:

> So wie alle Arten der Unvernunft das Daseyn der Vernunft und ihren Missbrauch voraussetzen: so muessen alle Religionen eine Beziehungen auf den Glauben einer einzigen, selbststaendigen und lebendigen WAHRHEIT haben, die gleich unserer Vernunft seyn muss, und daher nicht durch die Genesin der letzteren, sondern durch eine unmittelbare Offenbarung der ersteren erkannt werden kann. (N III, p. 191) [12]

It is worth reemphasizing here that for Hamann, as well as Blake and Boehme, it is not reason itself which is destructive, but its "Missbrauch," its misuse in the hands of those who would subordinate all human perceptive faculties to it, exchanging an imaginative apprehension of infinity for the myopic corporeal sight which perceives

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[12]Just as all types of irrational thought presuppose the existence of reason and its misuse, so must all religions have a connection with faith in a single, independent, living TRUTH, which must be as our reason, and hence become known not through the birth of the latter, but rather through a direct revelation of the former.

only the prison of the unredeemed natural world. Thus these three authors clearly viewed themselves as visionary warriors whose works supplied "the chariot of fire," as Blake wrote, upon which they entered battle against the prevailing philosophical thought of their day. They held this rationalistic thought directly accountable for the debased societies they saw enveloping humanity all around them.

I will study in detail each author's conception of history and its inseparable relationship to the Bible. Here again there appear remarkable conceptual parallels: each writer views history as essentially typological, referring back to a grand eternal drama depicted in scripture. The Bible is of course the most important textual source for these visionaries, a source sacrosanct only in its essence, a document of the ultimate spiritual and social reality whose light they refracted and clarified through their own radical perspectives. For Blake, Hamann, and Boehme, history is not something to be contemplated passively, something which merely occurs, but rather something which must be wrestled with until it yields its eschatological significance.

Of course these radical Christians possess essentially apocalyptic views of the historical process. Boehme in particular, however, has been criticized for his supposed "lack of a sense of history which marks the

mystic's works," in which dialectical thinking is "replaced by an endless oscillation" (Punter, 42-45). Again, such sweeping dismissals evince a basic misunderstanding of Boehme's essential tenets and glaringly ignore crucial assertions which maintain that the oscillation, the continuing struggle between Good and Evil, terms radically redefined in Boehme's private lexicon, will last only "bis auf den Tag der Wiederbringung" (p. 326).[13] Boehme's dialectical view of history is further underscored by a passage from the Morgenroethe:

> Weil aber die Menschen jezo am Ende dieser Zeit sehr luestern nach der Wurzel des Baumes, durch welches die Natur anzeiget, dass die Zeit des Baumes Entbloessung vorhanden sein und will ihnen der Geist derselben zeigen, und sich die Gottheit ganz offenbaren: welches ist die Morgenroethe und Anbrechung des grossen Tages Gottes, an dem soll wiedergebracht und aufgehet was aus dem Tode zur Wiedergeburt des Lebens geboren ist. (192) [14]

Hence history is surely moving to the final revelation of God, the reintegration of humanity into a divine whole, whose coming is precipitated by the imaginative vision's

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[13]"until the day of the Resurrection."

[14]Because humanity, however, desires at the end of this era to discover the root of the tree, through which nature reveals that the time of the denuding of the tree is at hand and wishes to show them the spirit of the same thing and the Godhead wishes to reveal itself completely. This is the dawn and ascension of the great day of God, on which what was born out of death to rebirth in life shall be brought back and arise.

denuding of the tree of nature in its efforts to discover the root of the same; this act, when achieved collectively by humanity, effects the dawn of God's greatest day, and leads to our rebirth into the spiritually charged life which is our lost birthright. The immediate availability of this apocalypse is further underscored when Boehme implores us to "Aufwachen," to awaken to the "Frucht" of eternal divinity here and now (169). Punter's assertion overlooks completely another crucial aspect of this process: "ringen" is not an endlessly oscillating necessity with no progressive goal; conversely, as we pass through the visionary warfare between our will towards "Liebe," or love and the expansive imaginative vision, and our will which seeks "Zorn," or self-righteous anger and the shrunken corporeal vision, the latter becomes successfully subsumed within the former, <u>not</u> negated, and this wrestling is replaced by the central activity of "Spiel" or playing. Thus there is real progress in Boehme's view of history, one in accord, to an extent, with a Marxist view: given Boehme's influence upon Hegel and Hegel's upon Marx, this accordance is less suprising than it initially appears. Just as Marx argued for a notion of social progress in which interaction and activity were never to be replaced by a static paradise, Boehme asserts a world view where progressive spiritual

and social activity are mandatory for the achievement of any meaningful existence.

Hamann's conception of history is put perhaps most concisely in his Biblische Betrachtungen:

> Die Naturkunde und Geschichte sind die zwei Theile, auf welche die wahre Religion beruht. Der Unglaube und Aberglaube gruenden sich auf eine seichte Physik und eine seichte Historie. (N I, p. 9)[15]

Here we see that Hamann's notions of history and nature are, as Joergensen asserts, "christo-zentrisch"; importantly Hamannn distinguishes in a very Blakean manner between true history and true knowledge of nature or "Physik" and "sickly" or false brands of these, upon which superstitions and atheism are grounded: history properly interpreted reveals that

> jedes Phoenemonen des natuerlichen und buergerlichen Lebens, jede Erscheinung der sichtbaren Welt ist nichts als eine Wand, hinter der ER steht, ein Fenster, wodurch ER sieht, ein Gitter wodurch ER guckt. (ZH I, p. 352)[16]

Thus even the most trivial quotidian events are vitally important threads in the tapestry of history, are

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[15]"Knowledge of nature and history are the two parts upon which true religion is grounded. Faithlessness and superstition are based upon a sickly physics and a sickly history."

[16]Every phenomenon of natural and social life, every manifestation of the visible world, is nothing more than a wall, behind which HE stands, a window, through which HE sees, a lattice, through which He peers.

powerfully charged with apocalyptic meaning; behind this tapestry stands God, whose presence is detectable not merely during periodic mystical raptures, but at every moment of every day, in even the meanest of occurrences. It is our task to apprehend this historical tapestry, to perceive the eschatological patterns woven carefully into its textures, symbols which are opaque to earthly reason. This perception is achieved through the invocation of two qualities present within the psyche of every individual, according to Hamann: the "Geist der Weissagung," or the spirit of prophecy, and the "Geist der Beobachtung," or the faculty of empirical observation; "Poesie" and "das poetische Genie" are associated with the former, "Vernunft" and "Philosophie" with the latter.

The parallels here with not only Blake's basic thought but also his exact diction are astounding. The "Geist der Weissagung," "Poesie," and the poet are all invested with the apprehension of the christocentric past and future which surround and merge with the present moment, fusing all three into a meaningful vision of the divine drama of human existence. The present moment is seized and placed within the order of our daily lives by the faculty of empirical observation; thus both spirits are vital to our full consciousnesses, but only the spirit of prophecy is truly capable of visionary dialectics. Hamann asserted these spirits should always interact

dialectically, as in Blake's Zoas, but in his own age saw the visionary intensity of Hebraic poetry replaced by an elevation of abstract philosophy, the "Geist der Weissagung" by the "Geist der Beobachtung."

Blake's radical notions of history evince striking similarities with those of Hamann and are perhaps most succinctly articulated in his famous assertion that "Reasons and opinions alone concerning acts are not history. Acts themselves are history." Here again the central importance of the active engagement of the imaginative powers looms large. Significantly, "Acts," not mere contemplation or isolated thought, constitute history. We must impose form upon the apparent chaos of history; we must extract its spiritual significance from events by questioning them. Otherwise we will never perceive the inevitably apocalyptic structure which encases them--an apocalypse available in every moment properly apprehended. This apocalypse will effect the recovery of the Human Form Divine, and the destruction of the distorted and distorting matrix which envelopes us now.

For Boehme, Hamann, and Blake, the essential unity of humanity has been so completely obscured by perverse social institutions that we exist under the conditions of what Carlyle was to term the "Cash Nexus," a state in which the only connection we perceive between ourselves as

humans is that one which enables us to consume individuals as commodities. And in fact it is those same social institutions--church, state, and others--created initially to serve humanity whose beck and call we must now obey. We, once masters of our fate, have become the lackeys of collective abstract entities whose authority we refuse to question because we are too comfortable in the very chains, "the mind-forg'd manacles," as Blake termed them, with which our continued adherence to these institutions fetters us. According to Blake, Hamann, and Boehme, the only way to throw off these chains, tempered over the course of fallen history is to enter into "Mental Fight," warfare on a visionary plane, imaginatively informed action on a social level, which will ultimately restore the lost unity of divine humanity.

That restoration is also prevented in no small degree by aesthetic ideologies. In any literature, during any epoch, there exists a dominant ideology of aesthetics (Ferber, p. 9), a set of "status quo" prescriptions for the creation of properly decorous art, and no study of these three writers would be complete without closely scrutinizing the manners in which their works, through their innovative use of rhetoric and through their formal qualities, attack the staid literary formulae of their eras. Most often they execute their attacks through radical innovation and invention, but all three are also

masters of assimilation, of appropriating the rhetorical norms which they so despised and then inverting them, turning them against their opponents. Thus Boehme and Blake, both of whom constantly created new words for concepts previously inarticulate in their cultures, were also consummately skilled at assuming and redirecting the verbal and syntactical weapons of the rationalists towards altogether different targets: Boehme constantly employs scientific, alchemical, and astrological diction but charges it with radically transfigured meanings; Blake, in works such as There is no Natural Religion and All Religions are One incorporates almost perfectly mimed Lockean diction and syntax in order to decimate basic Lockean positions. Hamann is perhaps the most masterful rhetorical terrorist which any literature has to offer; schooled extensively in the jargon and aesthetics of the Enlightenment, and once a devoted adherent of its tenets, his work evinces a ceaseless hurling together of Greek, Latin, Hebrew, French and English diction and literature with an adeptness that asserts him as erudite as any writer to emerge from the eighteenth century; yet the effect of this heterogenity is a conscious appropriation, a radicalization, of the willfully "plain" prose or a writer such as Lessing, who came to represent for Hamann what Newton and Bacon did for Blake. Hamann described this process of aesthetic deconstruction as seizing

"Goliaths Schwert," the sword of one's enemies in order to decapitate their arguments with their own weaponry.

Yet it is still in terms of their radical stylistic and formal originality that these writers are most remarkable. All three, despite their prophetic tendencies toward invective and satire, realized that, as Erdman has shown, the true prophet, unlike the satirist, recognizes not only the disparity but the unity at the core of humanity. And in search of that unity each author strove mightily after the retrieval of the "Ursprache," the original, imaginatively saturated language which we once communicated with equal facility and comprehension: this struggle against the aftermath of Babel is most evident in Boehme and Blake's constant creation of new words and phrases, and in Hamann's constant use of a barrage of various languages in an attempt to indicate the pathetically fragmented and spiritually inarticulate state of humanity.

I think Boehme's work may be described as ardently gothic in the face of an incipient classicism, Hamann's "kabbalistische Prosa" as exuberantly baroque in its elaborate and fantastic qualities, yet completely devoid of the pointless vacuousness of useless ornament, while Blake's writing may be viewed as a fusion of gothic and baroque elements into a highly individualized form of neogothicism. The numerous--and at times apparently

endless--catalogs which inhabit the works of Boehme and Blake are infused with a vitally important purpose: these lists exist not for the sake of symmetry, as in classical rhetoric, but are contained within a more comprehensive sphere. Apparently arbitrary and certainly frustrating, they represent Boehme and Blake's attempts to ground every minute particular in universal ideation, to use Hegelian terms; to provide virtually every isolated phenomenon of this temporal world with its rightful place in the absorbing unity of the eternal.

Similarly the exhortatory intensity of Hamann's rhetoric marks a radical departure from the "plain style" so valued by his rationalist contemporaries; at times sublimely beautiful, at times purposely grotesque and shocking, his prose is ever directed towards one overriding goal: the revelation of the true and immanent God, whose presence among us had been all too effectively obscured by meaningless abstractions expressed in heroic couplets and homogenous prose. Thus Hamann reacted against the glaciated neoclassical prose and poetry of his day with his own baroque fury in an effort to galvanize his anesthesized audience into spiritual awareness, which he believed would in turn lead to awareness of the social injustices which he saw all around him.

I believe that by asserting that Blake, Hamann, and Boehme are practical visionaries as opposed to "intuitive

mystics," which most recent criticism has unfortunately persisted in labelling them, their exaggerated uniqueness may be radically reevaluated. These writers' particular emergence from a central core of visionary thought indicates the presence of a continuing current of anti-ideological ideas and arguments which are in surprising agreement with Marx' basic assertions, the major differences being a matter more of terminology than one of real substance. A political critical perspective, which has ironically been so illuminative of Blake and so damaging to Boehme and Hamann of late, should, when applied with the requisite attention to the minute particulars of each author's complex canon, finally reveal a powerful unity of diverse visionary thought which binds these three highly singular authors together in the common and vital cause of the continuing visionary warfare against unjust social structures.

## CHAPTER II

## THE CORROSIVES OF CLARIFICATION

"The Imagination is not a State: it is the Human Existence itself." (Milton, 32:32)

"Meine grobe Einbildungskraft ist niemals imstande gewesen, sich einen schoepferischen Geist ohne genitalia vorzustellen." Hamann, letter to Herder, May 22, 1768 (ZH II)[1]

"Was ist es nun, das an uns Fremd ist, dass wir nicht koennen Gott sehen? Diese Welt und der Teufel in Gottes Zorn ist es, dass wir nicht mit Gottes Augen sehen, sonst ist keine Hinderung." (Menschenwerdung Christi, 311, 7.6)[2]

Recent critical debate concerning Romantic poetry has called into question not only the very definition but also the ramifications of that phrase. This debate holds particular relevance for Blake and, I believe, for Hamann and Boehme as well. Hamann is generally examined as the major connective figure between German Enlightenment and Romantic literature, while Boehme, with his widely-known influence upon Coleridge, Hegel, and others, is often considered as the father of Romantic thought, and as Hegel himself asserted, of modern philosophy as well. Jerome

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[1]"My coarse imagination has never been capable of envisioning a creative spirit without genitalia."

[2]"What is it then, that is alien in us, that we cannot see God? It is that this world and the devil remain in God's anger, that we do not gaze with God's eyes; otherwise there is no hindrance."

McGann's incisive work The Romantic Ideology calls into question the corpus of recent criticism focusing on British Romanticism. He asserts that this corpus accepts uncritically and propagates unconsciously the ideologies which the artists it examines offer as alternatives to the predominant ideologies of their epochs. According to McGann, this acceptance stems from a failure to examine adequately the reified terminology which Romanticism has produced, especially Coleridgean and Keatsean terms and phrases such as Synthetic Reconciliation, Negative Capability, and above all, the Imagination: he describes this process in the following manner

> [The] idea that poetry, or even consciousness, can set one free of the ruins of history and culture is the grand illusion of every Romantic poet. The idea has been inherited and reproduced in the cultural support systems--principally the academy--which followed in the wake of the Romantic Movement. In English and American culture, this idea has developed out of the work of Coleridge and Hegel. As a consequence, academicians and literary commentators have turned what Blake once called "poetic tales" into "forms of worship." In current terms (or perhaps "jargon"), the ideology of Romanticism has undergone a process of cultural reification. Today the scholarship and interpretation of Romantic works is dominated by an uncritical absorption in Romanticism's own self-representations. (137)

A definition of Romanticism is adequate only in so far as it can account for the epochal phenomena which produced that movement, and as McGann illustrates quite clearly,

the definitions offered by Abrams, Bloom, Mellor, and Wellek are much too exclusive. The major problem which these attempts to account for Romanticisms share, despite their perceptiveness and varied methodologies, is that

> Comprehensiveness is achieved by definitional exclusion....ignor[ing] or gerrymander[ing] the phenomena to be studied....Definitions of Romanticism are legion because none exhaust the various elements which learned commentators have shown to be characteristic of the subject. (24-27)

The failure to analyze closely the conceptual alternatives proposed by a particular artist, the self-contradictions which McGann perceives in those alternatives, and the exclusion of various aspects or even the central thought of certain figures from the same time period are remnants of a criticism which is itself essentially Romantic in its biases and methodology. McGann's basic argument against such scholarship is that the particular importance of English Romantic poetry lies not in its alternatives to capitalism, its supposed reconciliation of such a society's contradictions through a synthetic, organic unification of humanity, art, and nature. These are based, in his view, upon an escape to the realms of purely conceptual thought, to some envisioned essence from which all diverse and discordant phenomena spring. This is the intellectual tendency at the heart of Hegelian thought and our critical tradition.

The importance of Romantic poetry rather lies in its dialectical questioning of the dominant ideologies of its time, and further, in the work produced by poets such as Byron and Shelley--who are often dismissed from studies of more "high-minded" Romantic artists, poetry which questions those earlier ideologies proffered by Blake, Wordsworth, and Coleridge. For McGann, a poet such as Byron also deconstructs the dangerous tendency of Romantic thought to retreat from social action to the mind of the singular genius, the poet as an intellectually all-powerful yet socially static Vates, who negates the possibility of concrete social progress because of the inherent futility of such actions. Thus Byron and his ilk are often dismissed or indicted directly as lacking greatness of vision precisely because their poetic vision does not coincide with preconceived mainstream critical notions, which affirm only those poets whose thought reinforces humanistic quasi-Hegelian values.

Such distorted critical perspectives are important, McGann argues, precisely because they elucidate through a kind of mimesis the central tenets of Romantic thought. Yet they lead to "definitional exclusion," to theories of Romanticism which cannot account for the darker, more desperate obverse of a deeply Romantic poet such as Byron whose work "in contrast to Blake, Wordsworth, and the early Coleridge, has to be defined in negative

terms: nihlism, cynicism, anarchism" (McGann, 110). Nor do such perpspectives account for the somber Romantic despair of Kierkegaard. Although I strongly agree with McGann's general argument, I believe it misrepresents Blake's work in a manner that also points to symptomatic difficulties with critical studies of Hamann and Boehme. Overlooking that Blake's conception of the "Imagination" is highly different from those of Wordsworth, Coleridge--who suspected him of insanity--or Byron, McGann's attacks upon the uncritical acceptance of reified Romantic terminology, so insistent upon exact differentation elsewhere, do not lead to an examination of the reified terms he attacks.

The identification of such conceptualizations as reifications is not enough; we must further examine the differences between each Romantic thinker's singular version of such conceptualizations. McGann argues that the Romantic poets in general retreat finally to "the realms of pure thought" but he never defines exactly the features of those realms, and thus replaces the reification of the imagination with another unexamined concept, the generalization of pure thought. This argument is also finally quite similar to those indictments of Blake which depict him as an unintelligible and inefficacious mystic, dwelling in the rarefied atmosphere of some exclusive epiphany. We have also seen

this same general indictment applied unfairly to the works of Hamann and Boehme. Such contentions overlook four crucial aspects of the imagination shared by all three writers. For them the imagination is inherently social in nature; it is grounded in the material particulars of experiential existence; its powers are apotheosized and humanized in Christ; and it is closely linked with sexual energy.

I believe we can establish a fitting context for the specifically social definition which Blake, Hamann, and Boehme developed for the creative vision by referring to Marx's assertion that

> We presuppose labor in a form that stamps it exclusively as human... what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality. At the end of every labor-process, we get a result that already existed in the imagination of the laborer at its commencement. (Kapital, I:185-187)

Raymond Williams' insightful explication of this passage brings out its particular relevance for our discussion:

> Consciousness is seen from the beginning as part of the human social process, and its products in 'ideas' are then as much part of this process as material products themselves. This, centrally, was the thrust of Marx's whole argument.... (59-60)

Bees create by instinct, humans through insight. Unlike beehives, our material domains are determined by cultural,

geographical, and historical influences, and furthermore, by our dissatisfaction with merely repeating the forms of the past. Importantly, what makes human labor human for Marx is precisely its imaginative beginnings. It is imaginative envisioning or "pre-visioning" which distinguishes our creative efforts from those of industrious animals and insects. Those efforts are realized not through mere calculation, sheer reason; but through the intuitive, totalizing imaginative leaps from the minute particulars of existence to the envisioned product which are intrinsic to all creation, not just that of literature. And as Williams asserts, this creative consciousness is an inseparable "part of the human social process." Marx thus closely parallels the basic thought of Blake, Hamann, and Boehme concerning the imagination. Unenlightened, precipitate construction is, for Marx, inferior. The productions of time must by directed by the essential, eternally human faculty of imagination. Thus Marx realized the importance of this faculty, of something more than scientific rationalism for the creation of a truly egalitarian world.

For Blake, Hamann, and Boehme, the imaginative powers are necessarily practical, inseparable from social action. There is no merely conceptual, absolutely intellectual realm to which we can or must escape. Thought and action are for them inextricably intertwined;

it is just as impossible for them to dwell in a domain of pure thought as in one of pure action devoid of intellect. Their dialectics of the imagination are, I would argue, inherently social forms of progress, since their workings must defeat the "Selfhood," the individual isolated from meaningful, essential societal engagement--our greatest enemy. Boehme's "Selbheit" and Hamann's assertion of the necessary "Hoellenfahrt der Selbsterkenntnis" from the isolated "Ich" into an interpenetration with the "Du," or other, both prefigure Blake's articulation of the horrific results of the refusal to abnegate imaginatively the destructive constrictions of the pure Selfhood. These constrictions are evident in the alienation of individuals from one another, an alienation which false ideology postulates as natural.

Significantly, each writer limns a portrait of intellectual struggle, of wrestling with the cold fire of self-absorption, journeying through a hell of self-knowledge, of attempting to erect Jerusalem upon the dust of Ulro, yet this intellectual struggle is necessarily bound up in--indeed is inseparable from--a social network. These struggles constitute the "Wars of mutual Benevolence Wars of Love" whose weaponry consists of the "Bow of Mercy & Loving Kindness." This weapon symbolizes the creative imagination and its necessary

fusion with love and compassion, not pity. Moreover, it is distinguished from the deadly black "Bow of the clouds of secresy" which Urizen wields in The Book of Ahania (3: 26).

Yet when McGann asserts that the "idea that poetry, or even consciousness, can set one free of the ruins of history and culture is the grand illusion of every Romantic poet" (137), I think he overlooks the exceptional nature of Blake's poetry. The sheer absorption in realms purely mental which McGann rightfully attacks in Coleridge and Wordsworth is what Hamann and Boehme, together with their English comrade, consistently indict, as an examination of their works will make clear. For them, the highly charged beams of the individual imagination stream through the flawed, many-faceted prism of social reality, and the respective clarity and focus of those illuminative currents are determined by the extent to which they burn away the dulled distortions and cracks of prevailing ideology. Their common cause is to exhort humanity to concentrate their particular luminescences so as to totally purge that crystal of opacities and impurities. They urge us not to escape "the ruins of history and culture" but to take those very ruins as raw imaginative material and reconstruct those them into a more viable, just structure.

If the views of Boehme, Hamann, and Blake concerning the imagination are inherently social, an assertion I will support in the course of this chapter through intense examination of their works, it follows that they are also firmly grounded in the minute particulars of existence and in the sensual faculties through which we perceive those particulars. We have already seen that none of these authors rejected rationalism categorically, as is commonly argued, but insisted upon the imaginative powers' inseparability from the five "Gerstenbrodte" of the perceptive faculties. The reasoning powers are those which assimilate and order the diverse stimuli those faculties receive. The imagination's role is not then to synthesize or homogenize these stimuli into some higher organic unity, a goal commonly extolled as a quality of "highly serious" Romantic poetry. For these visionaries, the imaginative faculty aligns the antithetical particulars of material reality into a <u>dialectical</u> unity, best evoked by Blake's descriptions of "an innumerable Dance yet all in order sweet & lovely" (M 31-32), and of a heaven where humanity "walked / To & fro in Eternity as One Man reflecting each in each & clearly seen / And seeing" (J 98:38-40). Importantly, unity in one collective body does not sacrifice individuality, for each constituent "atom" of that body sees clearly and and is clearly seen. Boehme concurs with this view in his

emphasis upon a dynamic paradise attainable on earth, a realm where "Ringen" is replaced by the equally dynamic but more productive "Spiel," and Hamann's own dissilient prose asserts a similar perspective through its vibrant, demanding structure.

Such a dialectical unity does not synthesize or smooth over its constituents' rough edges and stands in marked contrast to Coleridge, who "says in the Biographia and elsewhere that the imagination reconciles opposites and smooths away contradictions" (Engell 223). Nowhere in the Biographia does Coleridge state his view more clearly than in Chapter IV:

> The poet, described in ideal perfection, brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other according to their relative worth and dignity. He diffuses a tone and spirit of unity, that blends, and (as it were) fuses, each into each, by that synthetic and magical power to which we have exclusively appropriated the name of imagination. This power... reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities.... (Noyes, 427)

I would emphasize here that Coleridge desires a unity derived by "blending" and "fusing," terms which imply a process of homogenization and stultification. For Blake, opposites are not reconciled but aligned by the imagination; negations, not contradictions, are eradicated by the imagination, as Blake asserts in Milton:

> The Negation must be destroyed to redeem the Contraries
> The Negation is the Spectre; the Reasoning Power in Man
> This is a false Body: an Incrustation over my Immortal
> Spirit; a Selfhood, which must be put off and annihilated alway
> To cleanse the Face of my Spirit by Self-examination (M 40: 34-38)

The resultant vision is one in which particularity is not sacrificed to uniformity; instead the currents of repulsion powered by a corrupting ideology are quelled and reversed into an highly magnetic attraction, creating a realm where the "two classes of men," as well as the "Sheep" and "Goats" who dwell in the upper margins of the preface to Jerusalem, and all things are not conflated but conjoined, a conjoinment which, like Michelangelo's depiction of the creation of Adam, is defined as much by its pregnant and profoundly charged spaces as by its connections.

Of course if the imaginative faculty for Blake, Hamann, and Boehme is essentially social and highly specific, grounded in a necessary annihilation of the false Selfhood and an ordering of sensual stimuli, it must also be closely aligned with sexuality. For them, intercourse, performed with love, is the ultimate dissolution of all boundaries between the social and sensual. Blake argued that an improvement of sensual enjoyment would necessarily deepen our imaginative powers;

Hamann asserted that the rhetorical intricacy and difficulty of his prose was due in part to its intense sexual content: "diese Schuerze von eigenblaettern habe nolens-volens flechten muessen, um die Pudenda meiner Autorschaft und ihrer Auesserung zu bedecken" (ZHII, 123).[3] Boehme believed that desire, specifically sexual desire, was the propellant force behind all action and actualization, and that the imagination must guide it away from the dangers of selfish possession and mere viscerality towards that destruction of the "Selbheit" which should be the ultimate goal of intercourse, as he asserted repeatedly throughout his work. These authors' insistence upon a socially relevant, emphatically particular, vibrantly sexual imaginative vision strengthens their essential alliance in the war against absolute and abstract rationalism.

James Engell, in The Creative Imagination, delineates the essentially social nature of Blake's conception of the imaginative faculties:

> The freedom of the self to create something eternal means the opposite of self-involvement and self-concentration, the lowest and worst form of living hell (Ulro), where the individual psyche splits into specters and devours itself in self-cannibalizing solipsism. (249)

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[3]"I had to weave this apron of fig leaves, whether I wanted to or not, in order to conceal the pudenda of my authorship and its expression."

It is this freedom which we must avail ourselves of, and in order to do this we must first perceive its presence. In terminology strikingly similar to Blake, Boehme asserts that this perception can only be achieved by using "das umgewandte Auge," the transformed eye of the creative vision, which actively forms the general pattern of experiential existence into an individual perspective, "For the Eye altering alters all" (E 485). Hamann makes a similar point when he argues that

> Der Gipfel der Atheisten und die groesste Zauberei des Unglaubens ist daher die Blindheit, Gott in der Offenbarung zu erkennen, und der Frevel, dies Gnadenmittel zu verschmaehen. (I, 5)[4]

This indictment strikes a chord which Blake echoes by asserting that "The idiot Reasoner laughs at the Man of Imagination and from laughter proceeds to murder by invaluing calumny" (M 32:6-7). Thus each writer decries a kind of willful visionary blindness as the underlying cause for the sordid state of the human condition. We are not thus receptors but perceptors who must separate that which is eternal from the transient.

What is transient in our current reality is the separateness, the forced alienation of societies whose

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[4]The height of atheism and the greatest sorcery of unbelief is thus the blindness of refusing to recognize God in revelation and the sacrilege of scorning this means of grace.

frameworks are soldered by the cash nexus. What is eternal is the inevitable supercession of these frameworks of "pre-history" with the justly based societal networks which the imaginative vision, cutting across the fields of material reality, will erect in what Marx considered "real history." Such vision necessitates a turning outwards from "die Selbheit," the "Ich," the "Selfhood," towards the fields of lived experience, the essentially social nature of the external world. As the epigraph above from Boehme asseverates, we perceive the divine in this world by penetrating its opaque exteriors to the core of energy beneath, by seeing with "God's eyes," which, in a radical inversion of doctrinal Christianity and a rejection of the incipient Deism of his own epoch, are not removed from the plane of existence. Rather, as the epigraph from Menschenwerdung Christi asserts, they fill the sockets of every human skull, unbeknownst to the mass of humankind; it is as if Boehme is imploring us to discover the switch inside our own psyches which will allow us to mediate to the more powerfully perceptive mode of divine vision, a vision which radiates from and returns to our commonality as essentially social entities. Hamann underscores this assertion that humanity composes the collective perceptive faculties which constitute God when he states that "Alles Goettliche ist aber auch Menschlich," that everything which is godly is also human

and vice-versa (N III, 27). We must, for Hamann, realize that we share this divinity collectively, and indeed can only realize it fully by experiencing it collectively. It is this collectivity, stressed by these authors, which unites us as perceptors of our inherent divinity.

Thus we cannot pursue creative vision without turning outwards away from the solipsistic realms of pure thought to the reality where there is no separation of the material and spiritual, which are reciprocally constituent of each other. We must realize that we are God, that we, not some abstracted deity, are the creators and transformers of the material reality in which we are immersed. And this outward expansion cannot, by definition, be effected without radically altering the societal structures which envelope it. The cash nexus will be replaced by a bond of mutual concern, a concern stemming from constant recognition and redefinition of our inescapably intertwined existences. The hell of Ulro will be replaced by the soaring heights of Jerusalem, a paradisal city constructed not upon air but the solid plains of experience.

The refusal to engage in this essentially social vision results in the invocation of the Spectre, the "Selbheit," whether that refusal take the form of philistine capitalism or of a culturally informed yet socially irresponsible retreat into the realms of

thought. Paley offers an exceptionally incisive analysis of this oft-discussed aspect of Blakean thought:

> 'The Spectre is, in Giant Man; insane and most deformed,' says Los when he feels his own Spectre rising upon him. In Albion's Spectre that insanity takes the ideological form of the worship of authoritarian Reason; in Los it manifests itself as an obsession with a God who damns His subjects irrevocably and without reason. (245)

This spectral conflict posits the archetypal conflict between scientific rationalism and the creative imagination: the clash of letter against spirit, circumscribing form against pure energy. When Ferber asserts that for Blake "the word 'law' is invariably pejorative" he commits an oversight which occurs commonly in critical studies of Hamann and Boehme (117). Each of these artists believed Christ's sacrifice did abolish the Mosaic code, yet despite Boehme's virulent reaction against reductive systematic thought, Hamann's violent rejection of his own Enlightenment upbringing, and Blake's hatred of Newtonian science and Reynoldsean aesthetic formulae, each writer is aligned in his common recognition of the necessity of laws, as form-lending guidelines.

Yet the laws which they proffer in contrast to common notions of that term are much richer in spirit than letter. Blake's radical strain of Antinomianism is best expressed in his adherence to the "Laws of Eternity" which he posits in Milton (38:29-36) and explicitly contrasts

with the singular, reductive "Individual Law" (M 13:5), that seeks to bind the diversity of material existence and creative energy within its strictures. These eternal laws, distinct from the reductive law, recall Hamann's conception of a grammar without syntax, a matrix without restrictive boundaries, one constantly undulating, expanding to accommodate the thought which fills it. Hamann would later deepen that tenet, referring to it as a paradoxical "Gesetz der vollkommenen Freiheit" (N III, 38), the law of perfect freedom. Punter makes an especially informative insight into the nature of such attitudes when he asserts that

> The syntheses of wisdom and desire which Blake and Hegel sought necessitated a rejection of this [rigidly partitioned] attitude towards knowledge, and, in consequence, an intellectual practice which did not respect rigidity of form, but saw it instead as a way of keeping man from an understanding of the totality of which he is a part. It is this element in the thought of Blake and Hegel that has been labeled 'mystical,' but as Karl Shapiro writes, the mystical is the opposite of the creative process, and as such an inept description; where Hegel appears to be indulging in unsystematic philosophizing, and Blake to be dealing in vision and fancy, dialectic is in fact opposing to the fragmentary rationalist conception of system a higher, imaginative science in which subjective and objective moments are fused. (15-16)

Although Punter's reference here to "syntheses of wisdom and desire," like McGann's argument in general, blurs the contrast between Blakean and Coleridgean thought, his

description of "An intellectual practice which did not respect rigidity of form" is perhaps the most succinct and incisive formulation of the views towards the imagination which Blake, Hamann, and Boehme held. Their intellectual practices disdain any form, social, aesthetic or otherwise, which is defined by its inflexibility, yet they simultaneously evince an abiding concern for the necessity of flexible but very real "laws" defined by the content which invests them with meaning.

The "Laws of Eternity" and the "Gesetz der vollkommenen Freiheit" evince a deep commonality, one in which the "Everlasting No" of legality is replaced by visionary accommodation and affirmation. In the Blakean and Hamannean senses, such laws, at every level from the aesthetic to the political, conform themselves to the imagination, each interpenetrating in a dialectical definition of the other. Boehme parallels this concern in a particularly incisive articulation of his own conception of the imaginative vision and the defining structures with which it must struggle:

> ....Der aengstliche Wille muss sich nach der Freiheit der Kraft des Lichtes sehnen und ganz einergeben, und mit der begehrenden Imagination die Kraft der Freiheit fahren; Alsdenn gehet der starke Wille durch den Tod der Finsternis, durch das essentialische Feuer durch, und zerbricht die Finsternis, und faellt in die Lichtwelt, und wohnent im Feuer ohne Qual, in der Freudenreich. Und das ist die Pforte in Tenurium Sanctum, und Glauben in den heilgen

Geist, lieben Menschenkinder! (Menschenwerdung Christi, P IV 139, 4.16)[5]

The conjunction of the "freedom of power" and the "power of freedom" is strengthened by the necessary interaction with the potentially destructive but defining phenomena of the "fearful will," the "death of darkness," "the essential fire." Most significantly, it is "the desirous imagination" which is the motive and guiding force in this process of struggle, definition, and radical transformation. And this process leads ultimately, if effected properly, from the darkness of contracted vision to the world of light, the "Freudenreich" in which every human views the world with the eyes of God.

The inherently social nature of their conceptions of the imagination led Blake, Hamann, and Boehme to attack vociferously the abstract reason they saw rampant around them. Yet it must be stressed again that these artists never categorically rejected reason, a error which, as we have seen, critics continue to commit. Rather it was "idiot Reason," what Boehme terms throughout his canon "die toedliche Vernunft," or deadly rationalism, absolute

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[5]The fearful will must yearn after the freedom of the power of light and give completely, and the power of freedom must travel with the desirous imagination; then goes the powerful will through the death of darkness, through the essential fire, and breaks the darkness, and falls into the world of light, and dwells in fire without pain, in the realm of joy. And this is a portal in Tenuriam Sanctum, and belief in the Holy Ghost, dear children!

calculation and myopic logic which they so vehemently attacked. Punter, perceptive as his study is, has, as we have already remarked, been particularly unjust to Hamann in this regard and his basic misunderstanding of Hamann's central thought is further underscored when he contends that Coleridge shows

> the creative functions of the human psyche as primarily analogies of divine creativity. We can find this reliance on a notion of analogy running through romanticism, in, for instance, Hamann, Novalis, and Hoelderlin as much as Coleridge. (123)

Hamann would likely rail vehemently against his name being connected with a romantic so ethereal as Novalis, and anyone who placed such value upon the five "Gerstenbrodte" of the sensual faculties, and the physical world in which they should be immersed, is not likely to relinquish the vivid, concrete nature of those faculties for some dimly adumbrative, analogous redaction of them. For Hamann, as for Blake and Boehme, the realm of the divine is not analogous to our own, but emanates directly in an eternal current from and back to it, a current which wavers and intensifies with the relative clarity and focus of each individual's imaginative vision.

It is not reason in itself which these artists indict, but that form of it which leads to "Abstract Philosophy warring in enmity against Imagination" (J 5:59). Blake deepens the irony of this contrast between

evanescent rationalism and concrete imaginative vision in Chapter One of Jerusalem, where Albion is exhorted to

> Awake! awake O sleeper of the land of shadows, wake! expand!
> I am in you and you in me, mutual in love divine:...
> I am not a God afar off, I am a brother and a friend;
> Within your bosoms I reside, and you reside in me:
> Lo! We are One; forgiving all Evil; Not seeking recompense!....
>
> But the perturbed Man away turns down the Valleys dark;
> Saying. We are not One; we are Many, thou most simulative
> Phantom of the over heated brain! shadow of immortality!
> Seeking to keep my soul a victim to thy Love! which binds
> Man the enemy of man into deceitful friendships:
> Jerusalem is not! her daughters are indefinite:
> By demonstration, man alone can live, and not by faith.
> My mountains are my own, and I will keep them to myself!
> The Malvern and the Cheviot, the Wolds Plinlimmon & Snowdon
> Are mine. here will I build my Laws of Moral Virtue!
> Humanity shall be no more: but war & princedom & victory!
>
> So spoke Albion in jealous fears, hiding his Emanation and
> Upon the Thames & Medway, rivers of Beulah: dissembling
> His jealousy before the throne divine, darkening, cold! (J 4:6-35)

Here Albion, the former and potentially future Divine Body whose atoms are all humanity, has degenerated into the apotheosis of the "idiot Reasoner" (M 32), the anti-visionary defendant of the "Blindheit" which is the

perception of the untransformed eye bemoaned by Hamann and Boehme. The resultant fragmentation and alienation of his psychic constituents are catalyzed precisely by the selfish reason which also perpetuates the myths of necessary individual isolation. Blake laces this pivotal passage with a thick mesh of blackly ironic contrasts, between the true "land of shadows" which is Ulro, and the imaginatively transformed world Albion rejects as a "shadow of immortality," between visionary warfare and those struggles fueled by greed, jealousy, and hate, between forgiving and forgetting and revengeful remembrance, between the bonds of love, which Albion contends create "deceitful friendships," and those of manipulation, which actually entwine such relationships. Albion's tragic belief that expansive vision is a "Phantom of the over heated brain" underscores his total misunderstanding of the perceptive mode he once possessed, as well as of the constricted vision he now peers through. It is his own newly-adopted selfish rationalism that calculates the data of existence not in terms of commonality but singularity, which articulates the ratio of possession. Moreover this rationalism is, unbeknownst to him, the <u>true</u> delusion of an over-worked brain, etherealizing the diverse particulars of the experiential world into phantom generalizations.

Blake's next exclamation apparently plays into the hands of such idiot reasoners as Albion:

> ...I rest not from my great task!
> To open the Eternal Worlds, to open the immortal Eyes
> Of man inwards into the Worlds of Thought: into Eternity
> Ever expanding in the Bosom of God. the Human Imagination
> O Saviour pour upon me thy Spirit of meekness & love:
> Annihilate the Selfhood in me, be thou all my life!
> Guide thou my hand which trembles exceedingly upon the rock of ages,
> While I write of the building of Golgonooza, & of the terrors of Entuthon:
> Of Hand & Hyle & Coban, of Kwantok, Peachey, Slayd & Hutton:
> Of the terrible sons & daughters of Albion. and their Generations (J 5:17-26)

Although this passage would seem from casual observation to align Blake with that Coleridgean notion of the retreat to some purely intellectual level of existence as a means of transcending this world's petty concerns, I would contend, conversely, that it illuminates a basic and profound contradiction between such a notion and Blake's conception of the imagination. For Blake, we must turn inwards into the "Worlds of Thought" not as some final abode or retreat, but as towards a pivotal way station which offers us ultimate visionary sustenance. This initial journey is not an harried escape from the clangor of quotidian existence, but a means of unleashing those inner powers which lead to a radical alteration of the

outer world through an intensely dialectical interpenetration. The essentially dialectical nature of this process is underscored by the assertion that we thus travel "into Eternity ever expanding in the Bosom of God. the Human Imagination" (20). Blake carefully and meaningfully juxtaposes the "Human Imagination" against the "Worlds of Thought" (19), indicating that they are not identical. Rather they are posed upon antipodal ends of that eternity which is constantly enlarging within the breast of God, or the collective human race united by the bonds of love which Albion has rejected. The eternality of this union is expanded through the dialectical journeying initially inwards to the visionary plane, where the stimuli of experiential existence are reinterpreted in terms of their imaginative content, and then, imperatively, traveling <u>outwards</u> again where the material world is now transmogrified profoundly and forever, leading to the "four-fold" existence in which all are incorporated.

Blake then illuminates the inherently social nature of this concretely grounded process by expressing his desire to annihilate his own "Selfhood," not in some suicidal or physically flagellant fashion, but in order to remove those opaque portions of possessiveness and self-interest which obscure the visionary rays of a unified humanity. Thus what McGann attacks in Coleridge

as the ultimate self-absorption resultant from his longing for final rest in a purely intellectual realm is specifically spurned in Blake's highly particular conception of the imaginative process. Self-absorption can only result when we fail to return from the oasis of the worlds of thought back into material existence. Such myopia is forever overcome when we enter fully into such an existence charged by the expansive vision of our inescapably intertwined existences in the bosom of the god whom we compose.

Significantly, Blake further rejects ethereal notions of mere spirituality when he implores Jesus, whom he, together with Hamann and Boehme, considered as the embodiment and apotheosis of the imaginative powers in humanity, to steady his composing hand, which writes <u>not</u> upon the gossamer veils covering the portals to some mystical realm but upon "the rock of ages," as strong a metaphor as one could find to express a commitment to the historical process of material existence. The necessary dialectical interpenetration of that existence with imaginative vision is underscored immediately through a miniature version of the extensive and numerous catalogues of phenomena; Blake writes of the construction of Golgonooza and Entuthon, but simultaneously of the concrete existences of Hand, Hyle, Coban, and other very "real" figures. Moreover, he will delineate not the

effulgent spiritual effluence of the sons and daughters of Albion, but their "Generations," their physical existences within the matrix of history, in order to reveal the vatic current which charges that matrix and each individual dwelling within it. This nearly immediate mediation from the realms of the visionary to those of experience asserts that both realms are inseparable, opposed hemispheres of the same globe, and more importantly, both are readily accessible here and now to every individual human.

The inherent commitment to the material world which Blake evinces in his conception of the imagination is still frequently misconstrued, however, as Engell evidences when he argues that "for Blake, nature becomes subservient to a revealed faith. At the apocalypse we realize that nature is a necessary but interim stage to a higher reality" (251). The emphasis here upon "the apocalypse" not only overlooks Blake's persistent insistence upon the availability of an apocalypse to each individual, for Engell also aligns Blake with more "transcendental" poets such as Coleridge. Nature is a necessary stage, but not one that is simply passed through and cast off, transcended; in the four-fold existence each stratum is present in its transfigured visionary state. Nancy Goslee provides a perceptive corrective to Engell's perspective in her discussion of that startling passage

from Milton in which Blake the poet absorbs the body of his mentor:

> ...Blake absorbs the figure of Milton into his foot. At the same time, seemingly the whole universe, that vast cosmos which parallels Milton's in Paradise Lost, has become his body...Blake's imagined absorption of Milton has made him somehow a giant, here as vast as his ultimate giant form Albion. As Blake's earthly lineaments expand to contain the universe, his left foot remains the link which signals that the earthly or generative world will not simply be abandoned as Milton is regenerated. Blake transforms the spatial ideology of Newtonian science, anchored in material reality, through the cultural revisions of his poetry. (53)

Of crucial importance here is the assertion that Blake "transforms" the world as it is viewed through the chinks of Newtonian perception, but he does not transcend it. Blake's left foot remains firmly upon the ground of this world even as he reaches proportions which encompass the universe. Thus vision must expand beyond the parameters of the natural world in order to comprehend the universal totality, but the phenomena of that world supply the substance which provides the basis and vivifying warmth for that comprehensive vision.

Hamann also couches his conception of the imaginative vision in material existence, upon the five "Gerstenbrodte," and he too rejected the Enlightenment rationalism, whose proponent he had once been, precisely because he found it ultimately abstract. This rejection is stated cogently in his Biblische Betrachtungen:

> Gott hat sich geoffenbart den Menschen in der Natur und seinem Wort. Man hat die Aehnlichkeiten und die Beziehungen dieser beiden Offenbarungen noch nicht soweit auseinander gesetzt und so deutlich erklaert, noch auf diese Harmonie gedrungen, worinn eine gesunde Philosophie sich ein weites Feld oeffnen koennte. Beide Offenbarungen muessen auf eine gleiche Art in unzaehligen Faellen gegen die groesten Einwuerfe gerettet werden: beide Offenbarungen erklaeren, unterstuetzen sich einander, und koennen sich nicht widersprechen, so sehr es auch die Auslegen thun moegen, die unsere Vernunft darueber macht. (N I, 8-9)[6]

God has not created analogies of himself in nature and his Word, but has revealed himself directly in both the most material and the most evanescent of phenomena, in the physical world we are immersed in and the creative thought which articulates and deepens the particularity and commonality of that world. And just as Blake writes simultaneously upon the rock of ages and the leaves of eternity, so Hamann insists that vision must insist upon the inherent harmony between these two, a harmony evoked and clarified by ringing the separate chords of each phenomenon, which produce the dissilient mellifluence

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[6]God has revealed himself to humanity in Nature and his Word. We have not yet adequately examined and clarified the similarities and relationships between these two revelations, have not yet pressed for this harmony in which a sound philosophy could open a wide field for itself. Both revelations must be rescued in a similar manner, in innumerable instances, from the greatest objections; both revelations elucidate and support one another, and cannot contradict each other, however much the explanations which our reason make about them, might wish to.

of a divinely human unity. Importantly, this mellifluence cannot be struck by attempting to blur or lessen the notes singular to each revelatory mode, or in other words, cannot be elicited by the efforts of mere rationalism, which seeks to generalize and homogenize, to substitute bland melody for divinely charged harmony. Rationalistic interpretations blur the dialectically defining relationship between thought and material, which both elucidate and support each other. Rationalistic interpretations maintain that a contradictory chasm separates these two; imaginative thought realizes the delusive, illusive quality of such contentions.

This intellectual separatism permeates every aspect of the incipiently capitalist society which Hamann inhabited, insisting upon not harmony but a "natural" gulf between rich and poor, educated and ignorant, male and female, one nation and another. Thus "Abstract philosophy warring in enmity against Imagination" is for Hamann, as for Blake, complicit not only in philosophical distortions but in social injustice, indeed, supplies its very basis. Imaginative recognition of the unity between word and nature, thought and material, leads us conversely to realize the inherent interconnectedness of every aspect of our existences. And upon such a recognition a <u>sound</u> philosophy of inclusion, not exclusion, may be based, one shot through with the polyphonous harmony of disparate

phenomena. It is crucial that we recognize the significance of Hamann's diction here: he insists that such a philosophy may thereby open for itself a wide field, expanding outwards to incorporate the myriad particulars which populate the broad expanse of material existence, refuting the closure and contraction of rambling, etherealizing rationalism.

The expanses which that philosophy must encompass are scathingly contrasted with the narrow reaches of deistic thought in another passage from the Aesthetica:

> Die Natur wuerkt durch Sinne und Leidenschaften. Wer ihre Werkzeuge verstuemmelt, wie mag der empfinden?.... Eure mordluegnerische Philosophie hat die Natur aus dem Wege geraeumt, und warum fordert ihr, dass wir selbige nachahmen sollen?--Damit ihr das Vergnuegen erneuren koennt, an den Schuelern der Natur auch Moerder zu werden-- (N II, 206)[7]

The senses and emotions are the tools of nature, through which we carve our vision of eternity. Here Hamann again rejects both abject mysticism and rationalism; both do away with the generative world, the former through willful, esoteric etherealizing, the latter through creating substanceless abstractions, a tendency which Hamann defines as the separation of "Begriffe von den

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[7]Nature works through the senses and passions. How may those who maul her tools have any feelings? ....Your deadly, lying philosophy has moved nature out of the way, and why do you require that we should imitate it? --So that you can renew the enjoyment of becoming murderers of the students of nature as well.

Dingen" (N II, 207), of concepts from the things themselves. This psychological mutilation seeks to avert the rag and bone shop of the heart that is the concrete workplace of the divine imagination. Importantly, Hamann's rejection of such intellectual butchery extends Boehme's own attack upon the incipient deism of his own epoch, while signaling the most significant precedent voice of the roar that would soon become European Romanticism. For Hamann, the poet/artist/individual "muss den natuerlichen Gebrauch der Sinne von dem unnatuerlichen Gebrauch der Abstractionen...lauetern" (Ibid). It is the task of the artist in his work, and of individuals within their own existences, to separate the natural use of the senses from the unnatural use of abstractions propagated by deism.

Such abstractions perpetuate the illusion of a god removed from the human breast, one which Hamann will in no way tolerate; conversely, he asserts that

> Je lebhafter diese Idee, das Ebenbild des unsichtbaren Gottes in unserm Gemueth ist; desto faehiger sind wir Seine Leutseeligkeit in den Geschoepfen zu sehen und zu schmecken, zu beschauen und mit Haenden zu greifen. Jeder Eindruck der Natur in dem Menschen ist nicht nur ein Andenken, sondern ein Unterpfand der Grund-wahrheit: Wer der HERR ist. Jede Gegenwuerkung des Menschen in die Kreatur ist Brief and Siegel

> von unserm Antheil an der Goettlichen Natur, und dass wir Seines Geschlechts sind. (N II, 81)[8]

Merely the barrage of concrete verbs offers ultimate evidence of Hamann's anti-mystical, anti-rationalistic, anti-transcendental thought. The only true god exists within the human mind, and the material world which surrounds it, and the more aware we become of this the better we are to grasp--literally--his presence within that world and ourselves. Thus Hamann again deepens his dialectical interaction between thought and material, each working to define the other more clearly and evocatively. Significantly, "every counter-action of the human on the world of creation" asserts further our basic divinity, and moreover, provides the basic differentiation between ourselves and animals. This phrase is Hamann's longhand for Blake's conception of the "Poetic Genius" which animates us all, as the next line from the Aesthetica makes clear. Here Hamann invokes "eine Muse wie das Feuer eines Goldschmieds, und wie die Seife der

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[8]The livelier this idea is, that the image of the invisible God is within our minds, the more capable we are of seeing, tasting, inspecting, of grasping with our own hands His condescenscion within creatures. Every impression of nature upon the individual is not only a memorial but a pledge of the basic truth: who the LORD is. Each counter-action of the human on the world of creation is letter and seal of our share in the Godly nature, and that we are of His race.

Waescher!"[9], positing an important transition between the "Lichtwelt" which the "Feuer" of imagination is empowered to create according to Boehme, and the corrosive fires of hellish imagination which Blake fans in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell. He further aligns himself with Boehme and Blake as a radical Christian by alluding to the soap of Malachi 3:2, "For he [the messenger of the covenant] is like a refiner's fire and like fuller's soap," and not to the fair Nine whom the neoclassicists worship.

That this fire of refinement and clarification signifies the imaginative powers is made clear when Hamann asserts that unlike such misled deistic writers, "Der Autor....mag durch Geschoepfe--durch Begebenheiten--oder durch Feuer und Blut und Rauchdampf reden, worinn die Sprache des Heiligtums besteht" (N II, 204).[10] The true, visionary artist eschews the vague abstractions inherent in deistic thought, uttering his vision through the language of physical reality, through creatures, historical incidents, through the fire, blood, and steam which are the emissions of vibrant coporeal life. Ironically, Hamann obviates the rationalists who accuse him of murky mysticism, and contemporary critics who relegate him to the

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[9] "a Muse like the fire of the goldsmith, and like the soap of the washers!"

[10] "The author may speak through creatures--through events--or through blood and fire and dense steam, wherein consists the speech of the shrine."

realms of naive idealism, by immersing his entire philosophy in the solidity of lived experience.

Reiner Wild offers a particularly incisive statement of Hamann's virulent hostility toward the destructiveness of such rationalism:

> Hamann's Einspruch gegen die rationalistische Vernunft geht von seinem Wirklichkeitsverstaendnis aus: 'Nicht cogito, ergo sum, sondern umgekehrt, oder noch Hebraeischer Est; ergo cogito,' umschreibt er seine fundamentale Einsicht in einem spaeten Brief an Jacobi. Nicht Denken ist das erste Prinzip, aus dem Wirklichkeit konstruiert wird, vielmehr ist Wirklichkeit ein Vorgegebenes, auf das Vernunft antwortet, Wirklichkeit ist Anrede an eine vernehmende Vernunft.... Hamann durchschaute, ohne in dieser Begrifflichkeit zu denken, ohne ueberhaupt seine Einsichten in begrifflicher Sprache, gar in ein System zu fassen, die Dialektik der Aufklaerung, die Intstrumentalisierung der Vernunft, die er umschlaegt in Herrschaft.... (Hamann, 7)[11]

This radical and incisive inversion of the basic tenet of the arch-Rationalist Descartes collapses the intellectual empire which had been erected upon it. Material reality precedes the existence of mere thought and carries on a

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[11]Hamann's objection against rationalistic reason stems from his understanding of reality: 'Not with Cogito, ergo sum, but rather with the obverse, or still more Hebraic, Est; ergo cogito,' does he describes his fundamental insight in a late letter to Jacobi. Thought is not the first principle, from which reality is to be construed. Instead reality is a given, to which reason answers; reality is an address to a listening reason.... Hamann saw through, without thinking in its concepts, certainly without placing his insights in conceptual language or in a system, the dialectic of the Enlightenment, the instrumentalization of reason, which he converts to dominion.

dialogue with our five senses, unified by the imaginative powers. Wild makes a crucial point by distinguishing between "rationalistic" reason and "listening" or perceptive reason. The dialectic of the former is based upon the autonomy and precedence of "the Ratio" over all existence, and submits the disparate phenomena of the material world to its divisive generalizations. The dialectic of the latter assumes the preexistence of the physical realm which the imaginative powers must shape in conjunction with the necessary but subordinate power of a logic which perceives that separateness without seeking to blur its particularity. We do not exist merely because we think, a constricting and isolating doctrine; we <u>think</u> because we <u>exist</u>, and that existence is socially interconnected. Clearly, Hamann does not reject reason categorically but in a highly qualified sense. "Rationalistic," divisive reason, which seeks to dominate our other perceptive faculties, is destructive, "perceptive" reason constructive, as it works in harmony with those other faculties. Reality does not answer to this type of reason, but conversely the perceptive mode of reason replies to reality, the material world which antedates it. Hamann's visionary warfare against Cartesian systematizing perpetuates Blake's imperative "Striving with Systems to deliver Indivduals from those Systems" (J 11:5), upsetting the central foundation of

Enlightenment thought while eschewing the bland poison of its abstract language and conceptualizing.

This insistence upon the autonomy of the individual, upon the particular over amorphous generalizations, is emphasized further in an astounding passage from another letter to Jacobi which asserts that

> Die Aufklaerung unseres Jahrhunderts ist also ein blosses Nordlicht, aus dem sich kein kosmopolitischer Chilaismus, als in der Schlafmuetze und hinter dem Ofen, wahrsagen laesst. Alles Geschwaetz und Raisonnieren ist... ein kaltes, unfruchtbares Mondlicht ohne Aufklaerung fuer den feigen Verstand und ohne Waerme fuer den feigen Willen; ...hier liegt eben der Knote der ganzen politische Aufgabe. Was hilft mir das Feierkleid der Freiheit, wenn ich daheim in Sclavenkittel? Gehoert Plato auch zum schoenen Geschlecht, das er wie ein alter Hagestolz verleumdet? ....Also der oeffentliche Gebrauch der Vernunft und Freiheit ist nichts als ein Nachtisch, eine geiler Nachtisch. Der Privatgebrauch ist das taegliche Brod, das wir fuer jenen entbehren sollen. (Petri IV, 217-218)[12]

The term Enlightenment for Hamann is an ironic misnomer, for its proponents disallow the enlightenment they believe

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[12]The Enlightenment of our century is thus a mere northern light, from which no cosmopolitan Chilasism, as in a sleeping-cap and behind the oven, can be prophesied. All idle talk and reasoning is a cold, barren moonlight without enlightenment for cowardly understanding and without warmth for the cowardly will; ...here lies the knot of the entire political problem. What help to me are the festive clothes of freedom, when I am in fetters of slavery at home? Does Plato also belong to the beautiful race, which he slanders like an old crank? ....Hence the public use of reason and freedom is nothing more than a dessert, a rank dessert. The private use of reason is the daily bread which we should dispense with for this dessert.

that they further by wearing the sleeping caps of "rationalistic" reason and by sleeping behind the warmth of the "oven" which is the true generator of vivifying vision, the imagination. Their idle contemplations and utterances create only the spectral, freezing moonlight of abstract thought divorced from reality, offering no sustenance to a world already weak of will and vision. Thus such "Enlightenment" is really only a dim glow which flickers haphazardly over a world immersed in its lunar darkness. The answers to their pointless questioning are only a blind illumination to those who already wander in the world transfigured by vision where it is always midday, a striking parallel to Blake's own comments concerning Boehme, Paracelsus, Swedenborg, Dante, and Shakespeare in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell (MHH, 22).

The most seminal and renowned portion of this passage comes at its conclusion, and elucidates Hamann's earlier mention of the distinction between the "public and private service of reason." What benefit do the habiliments of revelry offer to us when we live in chains of mental slavery--the "mind-forg'd manacles"--within our own houses? Hamann makes an important and expansive qualification of "daheim" or "at home" when he writes that he thus refers to "Daheim" as "d. i. auf dem Katheder, und auf der Buehne und auf der Kanzel--"(P IV, 218), meaning thereby in the school, upon the stage, or in

the pulpit, emphasizing the inherently social nature of human existence. "At home" does not merely refer to the chinked caves of our separate existences but the innately political world we inhabit. And Hamann further qualifies his ironic wordplay upon the public and private service of reason to reveal he is contrasting its "rationalistic" misuse in vast generalizations and stupefying abstractions with its proper use by the individual "at home" in the process of developing "Selbsterkenntnis." Only by using reason first within the contexts of our own individual existences can we realize, with the invocation of the imaginative vision, our own interrelatedness with the whole of humanity. This initially private use of "perceptive" reason is the daily bread, the basic sustenance which prepares us for the "dessert" of its "public" use, the development of the totalizing vision achievable only by the concerted effort of all five of the sensual "Gerstenbrodte" leavened with the imaginative vision. However, those Enlightenment rationalists who seek to skirt this essential nourishment transform the "Nachtisch" into a repugnant and foul dish. And such rationalists would have us forsake the quotidian food of thought supplied by the use of reason <u>grounded in particulars</u> for the rank taste of "public" reason based on airy nothings.

Hamann thus, as Blake does, grounds his concept of the imaginative power ("Dichtungskraft"), the power to poeticize, to transfigure the isolated phenomena of this world into their original harmony, firmly within the external world, material reality. God reveals himself directly, not analogically, in nature and the utterances of humanity. It is our task to reestablish the proper dialectical interpenetration between the two in order to reveal fully their spiritually, socially unifying content. As Hamann asserts in Aesthetica in Nuce, "Poesie ist die Muttersprache des Menschengeschlechts"; we spoke originally in harmonious tones, rife with melody and the immediate conveyance of total meaning. The only means by which we can retrieve this mother tongue is to pursue it imaginatively, a task which falls primarily not to mere philosophers, but poets, or more accurately, the poet within all humans, as another quote from the Aesthetica will serve to illustrate:

> Rede, dass ich Dich sehe!-- Dieser Wunsch wurde durch die Schoepfung erfuellt, die eine Rede an die Kreatur durch die Kreatur ist; denn ein Tag sagts dem andern, und eine Nacht thuts kund der andern. Ihre Losung laueft ueber jedes Klima bis an der Welt Ende und in jeder Mundart hoert man ihre Stimme.--Die Schuld mag aber liegen, woran sie will, (ausser oder in uns): wir haben an der Natur nichts als Turbatverse und disiecti membra poetae zu unserm Gebrauch uebrig. Diese zu sammeln ist des Gelehrten; sie auszulegen, des Philosophen; sie nachzuahmen--oder noch kuehner!--sie in Geschick zu bringen, des Poeten bescheiden Teil.

> Reden ist uebersetzen--aus einer Engelsprache in eine Menschensprache, das heist, Gedanken in Worte, --Sachen in Namen,--Bilder in Zeichen; die poetisch oder kyriologisch, historisch, oder symbolisch oder hieroglyphisch --und philosophisch oder charakteristisch seyn koennen. Diese Art der Uebersetzung (verstehe Reden) kommt mehr, als irgend eine andere, mit der vekehrten Seite von Tapeten ueberein, 'and shews the stuff, but not the workman's skill;' oder mit einer Sonnenfinsternis, die in einem Gefaesse voll Wassers in Augenschein genommen wird. (N III 198-199)[13]

Here Hamann acquires Socrates' famous imperative and places it within the context of his own decidedly non-Classical assertions. He thereby reaffirms his belief in language as "practical consciousness," since it is through the imaginative interpretation of speech they we may "see" each other.

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[13]Speak, that I may see you! This wish was fulfilled through the creation, which is a speech to creation through creation; as one day speaks to the other, and one night makes it known to the next. Their password speeds over every clime to the world's end, and one hears their voice in every dialect. --The blame may lie where it will, (within or without us): We have nothing remaining for our use in regard to nature besides scrambled verses and disiecti membra poetae. To collect these is for the scholar; to interpret them, for the philosopher; to imitate them--or still bolder!--to put them in order, is the poet's modest task.

Speech is translation--from the tongue of angels into one of humans; this means: thoughts into words, things into names, images into symbols, which can be poetic or kyriological, historical or symbolic or hieroglyphic--and philosophical or characteristic. This brand of translation (read speech) is more in accord than any other with the inverted side of tapestries, 'and shews the stuff, but not the workman's skill'; or with a solar eclipse, which is viewed in a vessel full of water.

This profound contention is now intertwined with the revelatory content of the material world, and the "language" which it speaks. The created world is a speech about the individual through the individual; its input into our senses provides the basic stuff which we, through imaginative thought and communication, articulate into definite form, thus creating a dialectical cycle of formation and transformation. Importantly, this cycle is contained with the matrix of the historical process ("denn ein Tag sagts dem andern, und eine Nacht thuts kund der andern"), while the blame for our current fragmented and petty verse lies both without in the social environment which conditions our thought, and within ourselves, who refuse the effort necessary to recollect those scattered shards. The collection of these shards should be assigned to "the learned," but we have already seen what estimation Hamann held for the erudition of his day, and his valuing of Socrates' "ignorance." Truly learned people will be conscious not only of the books which they read, but of the physical world which speaks through those books. The interpretation of our cultural remnants belongs to the philosophers, but their imitation, or more importantly, in a step which refutes violently the basic tenet of neoclassical art and anticipates all of the European Romantic literature which was to follow it, their alignment into a coherent sense of destiny is the specific

task of the poet, not their synthesis in the "blended" or "fused" manner desired by Coleridge.

Hamann, who considered himself both philosopher and poet, is actually referring to our logical and imaginative powers when he cites the poets. Speech--and thus thought itself--is the translation of intellectual stimuli into socially communicative utterances; it is not merely mimetic, but synthetic, transformative, a dialectical interplay of definition and redefinition between the mind and the material world. And significantly, this dialectic can only assume its proper direction when it is guided by the poetic faculties, the imaginative powers. Mere interpretation is insufficient. We must go beyond the logical, "philosophical" elucidation of particulars to the creation of some connective matrix, one whose true form can only be determined by creative, "poetic" thought. Philosophy alone has led to the creation of a matrix which is in reality a cage. The "translatory" qualities of thought may assume either philosophical, poetic, or historical forms, but Hamann clearly implies that they should assume <u>each</u> form simultaneously; their severance from each other has been the work of those who rely upon the cold northern light of sheer reason.

Such over-dependence upon reason renders improbable the possibility of achieving a truly egalitarian society, for it disallows the foresight necessary to see beyond the

maze of phenomena which is the material world as it appears to a rationalist. Hamann recognized the role of reason in social and religious stultification, and uttered his displeasure in a manner strikingly similar to Blake's attack upon the "idiot Reasoner":

> Alles was der irrdischen Vernunft unwahrscheinlich und laecherlich vorkommt, ist den Christen unumgaenglich und unwiderleglich gewiss und troestlich. Was die Vernunft unterdrueckt und verzweifelt und verzagt macht, richet uns auf und macht uns stark in Gott. (N I, p. 46)[14]

Here Hamann makes an incisive pun by intentionally misspelling "irrdisch" or "earthly" with two "r's" instead of one, thus conflating it with the German for "error" ("Irrtum"). Again, it is errant earthly reason, seeking absolute and isolated autonomy for itself, which must be rejected outright. Such a perspective disallows seeing the forest for the trees; the trees are indispensable for any totalizing vision, yet we cannot hope to achieve a proper perspective upon their interrelatedness by wandering aimlessly around their trunks, but must instead climb to their tops in order to envision the whole from the viewpoint of the particular.

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[14]Everything which strikes earthly reason as improbable and laughable is to Christians inevitably and irrefutably certain and comforting. What reason suppresses and makes despairing and despondent lifts us up and makes us strong in God.

This emphasis upon concrete particularity is also shared by Boehme with Blake and Hamann, despite the great bulk of criticism concerning his work which argues otherwise. A few passages from Stoudt's study will serve to indicate this problem:

> Boehme broke through the 'gate in the deep center of nature' and so the mystery of the Godhead was not profaned....[his] religious knowledge began in mystical vision and realized itself in mature rational expression through living.... The Yes and No come from his own life; their resolution, empirically as well as speculatively, however was the result of mysticism, a final reworking of the insight he received in the quarter-of-an-hour dawn to eternity. From this he received his precious pearl which was so often cast before swine and worldlings. (42-59)

Stoudt's assertions that Boehme broke through the externals of nature and articulated that accomplishment in "mature rational thought" are important for their ground-breaking revelations of the foundation of Boehme's basic philosophy in lived experience and logical expression. Yet his contentions that that basic philosophy bowed reverently before the pious mysteries of some vague godhead, and that the knowledge of that philosophy stemmed from some "mystical vision," or that both were resolved as a result of a fifteen-minute epiphany, perpeptuate the basic misconceptions which have distorted Boehme's work for centuries. Boehme's vision, especially his conception of the imaginative powers, is

grounded solidly in the material world. His entire philosophy was not resolved through the fifteen-minute vision which Stoudt mentions; this particular experience, in which Boehme felt he discerned God in the refraction of sunlight upon a silver vessel, was undeniably important, yet it is but one event in a long succession of such visions, all of which are based on experiential knowledge. To claim that a man who wrote hundreds of pages and who claimed to walk in a nearly constant visionary state had his entire philosophy resolved in one brief episode is as inaccurate as to make the same argument for Blake's oft-mentioned encounter with the face of God as a young boy, or his self-proclaimed dinner with Ezekiel and Isaiah. This vision was surely for Boehme a magnificent complement, an embellishment of his thought, but it is finally only a particularly lovely filigree upon its already solid column. Moreover, he emphatically did not bemoan the casting of his works, in the manner of some effete esoteric, before "swine and worldlings," for it was precisely these worldlings whose vision he desired to expand. The precious "pearl" of his works, as Stoudt terms it, was wrought within the solid shell and muscular flesh of the material world. Boehme did indeed burst "the gate in the deep center of nature" but only to reveal the godhead within that portal--and thus our own breasts--not to genuflect humbly before its incomprehensible

secrets: for Boehme, there was no sacred mystery to be profaned. He only sought to reveal to others what was already apparent to him, that we are God.

And this revelation is only achievable through the imaginative interpretation of natural phenomena, through the same dialectical process of definition and redefinition between humanity and nature which Hamann and Blake elaborated in their own thought. Boehme underscores the diversity of reality and the incapacity of reason to comprehend that diversity in a powerful passage from the Morgenroethe:

> Dieses alles heisst darum Qualitaet, und hat doch mancherlei Kraft und Wirkung, aber nur eine Mutter, daraus alles Ding herkommt und quillt; und alles, was aus der Erde waechst, das lebt und quillt aus der Kraft dieser Qualitaeten--das kann kein vernuenftiger Mensch vereinen. (Kapitel 2.I)[15]

To unify these disparate phenomena into a totality which both eradicates isolation and yet preserves the vibrant diversity which invests our existences with beauty requires that ubiquitous but infrequently employed "Magia," the imaginative powers. Rationalism alone can only encounter and be stunned by the sheer multiplicity of this diversity. It seeks to avert directly confronting

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[15]All this thus signifies Quality, and has many powers and effects, yet only one mother, from which all things emerge and spring forth. And everything which grows from the earth lives and springs forth from the power of these Qualities--which no rational man can unify.

the inner significance of that multiplicity by reducing minute particulars to bloated generalizations. According to Boehme, it is precisely these qualities which lend the generative world its energy and dynamism, and which only the imaginative process can properly and fully discern.

Hans Grunsky has provided valuable insight into the sensual concreteness of that process; he asserts

> dass die Tinctur 'die Gestalten der finsteren Welt zum Feuerleben also renoviert und hochgradiert und ineinander transmutiert, dass aus der feindseligen, peinlichen Qual der ersten principii durchs Feuer, in der edlen Tinctur das hoechste Freudenreich wird.' Diese Laeuterungsprozess vollzieht sich also in fuenf verschiedenen, den fuenf 'Sinnen' entsprechenden Straengen, die alle, ohne sich zu vermischen, in der Tincture als in ihrer Hoechstgradierung zusammen laufen und damit fuenf von ihrer Geschichte unabtrennbare Momente eben an der Tinctur darstellen. (194)[16]

This "process of purification" is effected through the "renovation" of the images of the "dark world," the material world accepted as is, so that the opaque sheaths covering its phenomena are stripped back, creating not

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[16]that the Tincture renovates and refines and therefore transmutes into one another the forms of the dark world to the Firelife; that out of the antagonistic, painful torture of the first principii arises through Fire, in the noble Tincture the Realm of Joy.' This process of purification thus fulfills itself in five different cords corresponding to the five senses, which all, without coalescing, run together in their highest refinement in the Tincture, and therewith present with respect to the Tincture five moments inseparable from their history.

some higher, transcendent realm but transmuting our own into a "realm of joy." Significantly, this renovation is achieved by the five senses, which for Boehme are interconnected but not indistinguishable cords sensitive to the slightest vibration. Those vibrations must in turn be interpreted by the imaginative powers. The particular historicity of the stimuli which each separate sense experiences is underscored by Grunsky's argument that their temporal aspect is inseparable from the whole process of sensation. Thus Boehme's conception of the imagination is firmly grounded in sensual experience, not mystical vision. Vision is dependent upon the myriad particulars of this world; only distorted, irrelevant fancies are engendered by thought divorced from reality. Unlike true mystics, his goal is not to transcend the five senses but to incorporate them into the process of creating transformative social vision.

This basic tenet Boehme asserts over and over again. His belief in the positive transformative powers of the imagination is perhaps stated most clearly in a passage from Vierzig Fragen von der Seele:

> Der Wille, so der stark fuer sich gehet, ist Glaube: er formiert seine eigene Gestalt im Geiste; er hat auch die Macht, dass er kann ein ander Bildnis aus dem Centro Naturae formieren: er kann dem Leibe eine andere Form geben nach dem aeusseren Geiste: Denn der innere ist ein Herr des auessern....Also verstehen uns auch, kann der ernste Wille, welcher sonst Glaube heisst, mit dem Geiste grosse Dinge tun:

> Der Wille kann den Geist selber in andere Form setzen und der Geist kann sich in dieser Zeit des Leibes veraendern, welches ohne sein Bewusstsein geschiet durch die Imagination. (287: 6.9-14)[17]

The will that is synonomous with faith is the same brand of belief which Hamann and Blake affirmed; not some unquestioning hope in a saving external deity, but a firm persuasion that humanity can and must alter its own shape, the structures which form or deform the human pysche. Boehme asserts that this will/faith towards radical alteration forms its own image in spirit, but, crucially, it also has the power to create another form from the "Centro" of nature, not from the rarefied atmosphere of some nebulous, distant heaven. Moreover, the body itself can be transformed by this will, and for Boehme the individual human body was always synonomous with the ultimate human shape of a justly reintegrated society, as he contends in Drei Prinzipien: "Wir sind in Ihm [Gott] alle ein Leib in viele Gliedern"; individual

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[17]The will, which asserts itself strongly, is faith; it forms its own shape in the spirit; it has also the power to form another image from the Centro Naturae: it can give the body another form in accord with the external spirit: because the inner is the master of the outer....Thus we understand too that the serious will, that is otherwise called faith, can achieve great things with the spirit: the will can place the spirit itself in another form and the spirit can alter itself in this time of the corporeal, which occurs, without its awareness, through the imagination.

transformation necessarily involves change on a much vaster scale.[18]

Such change may occur because the "inner is master of the outer," an assertion which parallels Marx's distinction between the constructions of animals and those of humanity. It is not merely our capacity to create, but to deviate from existent structures, to obey the dictates of our inner workings and permutate endlessly the accepted forms of the past and present. We are not enslaved to some instinctual patterns of material construction, nor of social order, much as capitalist ideology would have us believe this; rather we exercise precisely what makes us most human when we question those patterns and replace them with our own. And we become more drone-like to the extent which we refuse to our assert our inner creativity upon our external reality.

That the inner can alter the outer and vice-versa is the point penultimate in importance which Boehme makes here. Of ultimate significance is his assertion that this dialectic occurs through the imagination, and that the entire process is necessarily grounded in the minute particulars of experiential existence. The impropriety of Stoudt's claims concerning Boehme's ethereal mysticism is further underscored when we examine to what a great extent

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[18]"We are in him [God] a body with many limbs."

Boehme insisted upon the necessity of those material phenomena. In the Morgenroethe, he maintains that

> Wo irgend ein fremder Gott ist, so hast du keinen Teil an ihm.... Wenn du ansiehst die Tiefe, und die Sterne, und die Ende, so siehst du deinen Gott, und in demselben Gott lebest du und bist du auch.... so bist du wie der ganze Gott ist, der da selber Himmel, Erde, Sterne, und Elemente ist: und hast auch ein solches Regiment in dir, und bist auch eine solche Person, wie der ganze Gott in dem Loco dieser Welt ist. (202: 23.4)[19]

Here he overtly rejects any strange and mysterious god as essentially inhuman, echoing Blake's call to "Seek not thy heavenly father beyond the skies..." (M 20:32). Moreover, the true God, who is ourselves, is imperceptible except through the phenomena of this world, stripped of their opaque exteriors to reveal the vibrant spiritual life beneath. Wherever we look, if we gaze with the "umgewandten Augen," we see God, and we do not merely dwell in God in the traditional doctrinal sense, which always necessitates adherence to doctrinal codes of behavior, we are God, just "such a person"--in a pregnant and poignant reversal--as God is, containing a cosmoversal array of diverse phenomena within ourselves. We are

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[19]Wherever a strange God exists, you have no part in him.... When you gaze into the depths, and the stars, and the earth, you see your God, and you live within and are the same God also....so you are as the entire Godhead is, who is himself the heavens, earth, stars, and elements; and you also have such a regiment within yourself, and are also such a person, as the entire Godhead is within the locus of this world.

large, we contain multitudes. But most importantly, we are as the Godhead who exists in the locus of this world, not some distantly removed paradise only to be discerned by elite mystics or achieved by pious adherents of debased moral creeds. Hence not only is Boehme's concept of the imagination, "das umgewandte Auge," of ultimate importance for the proper perception of reality, firmly based in the material world, but this faculty reveals to us that God is based in that world, and by discerning his presence we only discover ourselves.

Yet this realization does not lead to some Spinozan tendency to unify the phenomenal world into an order which blurs its dissilient diversity. Indeed, God is divine for Boehme in part precisely because of that diversity; the unity Boehme envisions retains the distinctiveness of its composite phenomena, for "Es hat jeder Stern am Himmel eine andere Kraft und Qualitaet als der andere, welche auch machen so vielerlei Unterschied in und unter den Kreaturen auf der Erden, im dem ganzen Geschoepfe" (Morgenroethe, 134: 3.9).[20] Thus his vision of the inherent unity of the material world proceeds from his initial and lasting recognition of its tumultuous diversity. It is the distinctions between disparate

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[20]Every star in the heavens has a different power and quality from the others, which creates the myriad distinctions in and among the earthly creatures throughout the entire creation.

phenomena which invest our world with its divine aura. While imaginative "re-visioning" eradicates comunicative barriers, it does not evaporate this fluid multiplicity.

For Blake, Hamann, and Boehme the ultimate champion of "re-visioning" is Christ. The social, dialectical, and material parallels in their conceptions of the imaginative powers are deepened by their view of Christ as the human apotheosis of the divine imagination. Each writer reviled the more Docetal and Pauline strands of Christianity, stressing the identity of Jesus as a human, and moreover, as a radical. The sword which Christ brought rather than peace or complacency is appropriated by Blake in Jerusalem as an imaginative weapon, "the spiritual sword that lays open the hidden heart" (J 9:18), expanding the Old Testament allusions of Isaiah's "destructive sword" in "The Argument" and "Proverbs of Hell" in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell. We can also be sure that Hamann is speaking in a dualistically typological sense when he assumes "Goliaths Schwert" to decapitate the Enlightenment's basic thought. Both artists thereby also stress the essentially sexual nature of Christian imaginative thought through their phallic imagery. Jesus also provides a major connection in the relationship each artist posited between creative and libidinal energy, functioning as, in addition to his role as the ultimate

warrior of social vision, an imaginative advocate of sexuality.

Like Boehme before him and Blake afterwards, Hamann felt Jesus to be the animating vision dwelling within each human, and, as the epigraph to this chapter indicates, could not conceive of a creative mind without genitals; there is hence a direct link between the expansive powers of artistic vision and those of sexuality. Jesus is the total human, the one individual who has come closest to achieving fully the four-fold vision which apprehends the "Freudenreich" where visionary warfare is replaced by imaginative "Spiel." Ferber's concise statement on this matter concerning Blake also sheds light upon the attitudes of Hamann and Boehme, for each of whom Jesus is the "personification of imaginative insight, incorporating the particulars of the historical process into a totalizing vision, revealing the eternal content which drives the productions of time" (161).

Blake's despisal of the "Creeping Jesus" who had been made a mouthpiece for the church and state axis was anticipated by Hamann, who asserted the very corporeal nature of his Christ as well as stressing his rejection of the corrupt mores of his time:

> Dass Christus sich nicht nur begnuegte ein Mensch sondern ein armer und der elendste geworden zu sein, dass der heilige Geist uns ein Buch fuer Sein Wort ausgegeben, worinn er wie ein Alberner und Wahnnsinniger, ja wie ein

> unheiliger und unreiner Gast unserer stolzen Vernunft angekommen ist. (I, 43)[21]

Those deists who call themselves Christians circumvent the ultimate antithesis of everything they designate as rational and virtuous: Jesus, the namesake of their religion. By their own standards he would be branded as slothful, unindustrious, and insane, and faced with his radical social critique, those same rational Christians would also most likely ride him upon their little mare, Reason, to a new Golgotha. Hamann and Blake's point is that their Christ is the rationalists' Antichrist, and this is so precisely because he embodies more than any other individual the disruptive, insurrectionary powers of the imaginative vision employed in visionary warfare.

Boehme limns his essential accordance with this radical view of Christ when he rejects the Protestant notions concerning Jesus' humanity by asserting "Du musst nicht denken, wie Johannes Calvus oder Calvinus gedacht hat, der Leibe Christi sei ein unallmaechtig Wesen, und begreife nicht weiter als den Locum Leib in sich" (Morgenroethe, Kapitel 20.76).[22] Such Docetal

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[21]That Christ was not content to become only a man, but also the poorest and most suffering of men, that the Holy Ghost gave us a book for his Word, in which he has arrived, like a fool and maniac, indeed like an unholy and unclean guest of our proud Reason.

[22]You must not think, as Johannes Calvus or Calvinus thought, that the body of Christ is not an all-powerful entity, and understands no more than its own bodily Locum.

attempts to etherealize Christ's humanity, ironically, devalue his divinity, for the two are inseparable. Christ was indeed solidly corporeal, with all the requisite accoutrements of humanity, and this is just why he is so signficant for these three writers: he realized more than anyone else that we are God, that there is no gulf between the two to be mediated by organized religion. Organized religion creates an artificial gulf between God and humanity in order to ensure its own continued existence, and deemphasizes the humanity of Christ, for what would happen if the masses they delude realized that Christ was as human as they are, and they as divine as he? Dominant social ideology reinforces this religious distortion by postulating a false chasm between the "divinely ordained" status of individuals according to their caste.

Boehme underscores his belief in the utter humanity of Christ in a seminal passage from the Morgenroethe:

> Nun aber musst du nicht denken, dass der Sohn ein anderer Gott sei als der Vater.... Der Sohn Gottes ist von Ewigkeit immer geboren und nicht gemacht, und ist das Herze und Glanz aus allen Kraeften seines Vaters, eine selbststaendige Person, das Zentrum, denn er ist eine andere Person als der Vater, aber nicht ein anderer Gott.... Also gehet der heilige Geist vom... Sohne aus und machet die lebendige Bewegung in allen Kraeften des Vaters. (P I, 42-45, 3.13-28)[23]

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[23]Now, however, you must not think that the Son is a different God from the Father. The Son has ever been born from eternity, and not made, and is the heart and gleam from all the powers of the Father; he is a person in

The Holy Ghost for Boehme corresponds to Blake's "Poetic Genius," the quickening current of imagination which charges all humanity. Hamann also asserts Christ as the animating spirit of vision which permeates the world and rejects doctrinal orthodoxy, arguing that

> Weder die dogmatische Gruendlichkeit pharisaeischer Orthodoxen, noch die dichterische Ueppigkeit saedducaeischer Freygeister wird die Sendung des Geistes erneuren, der die heiligen Menschen GOttes trieb zu reden und zu schreiben. --Jener Schoossjuenger des Eingebornen, der in des Vaters Schooss ist, hat es uns verkuendigt; dass der Geist der Weissagung im Zeugnisse des Einigen Namens lebe, durch den wir allein seelig werden, und die Verheissung dieses und des zukuenftigen ererben koennen; --des Namens, den Niemand kennt, als der ihn empfaeht, der ueber alle Namen ist, dass in dem Namen JESU sich beugen sollen alle derer Knie, die im Himmel und auf Erden und unter der Erden sind; auch alle Zungen bekennen sollen, dass Jesus Christus der Herr sey zur Ehre Gottes! ....Das Zeugnis JESU also ist der Geist der Weissagung.... (N II, 211-212)[24]

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his own right, the center, for he is another person than the father, but not another God.... Therefore the Holy Ghost goes forth... from the Son and makes the animated movement in all powers of the Father.

[24]Neither the dogmatic thoroughness of Pharasaic orthodoxy nor the poetic sensuality of Saddusaic free thinkers will renew the mission of the Spirit, which drives the holy men of God to speak and write. That favorite apostle of the Incarnate, who is in the bosom of God, has proclaimed it to us: that the Spirit of Prophecy lives in the testimony of the Only Name, through which alone we can become holy, and inherit its covenant and the future life;--whose name, no one knows, unless he receive it, which is above all names: so that in the name of JESUS all should kneel, who are in Heaven and upon the earth and under the earth; all tongues shall also proclaim that JESUS CHRIST is the MASTER for God's honor!.... The witness JESU thus is the Spirit of Prophecy....

The allusions here align and indict simultaneously the Pharasaic dogmatists and Sadduistic Free Thinkers of Jesus' time with those of Hamann's own, the proponents of doctrinal Christianity and the rationalistic deists, both of whom have crucified the essence of the true Christ and buried him under piles of ideological ranting. But most importantly, Hamann evinces a basic affinity with the thought of Boehme and Blake concerning Jesus and the imagination, which he terms "The Spirit of Prophecy." It is only by appropriating this prophesying power that we may become holy, or recognize our own holiness, as well as that of the world around us, a process which Jesus apotheosized for all humanity. Signficantly, blind dogmatists, myopic rationalists, and their adherents do not even "know the name" of <u>this</u> Jesus, the visionary radical, but only that pallid figure, that "Creeping Jesus" who serves their distorting ideologies.

Thus Jesus and imaginative vision, whether it is designated as the "Poetic Genius," the "Geist der Weissagung," or "Magia," are inextricably interlinked, indeed are nearly synonomous. Christ is the ultimate exemplification of the essentially social and concrete qualities of visionary, creative energy. And as mentioned above, he is also necessarily an advocate of the expansive qualities of sexual energy. Hamann's firm belief in the sexuality of creative genius was underscored in a

letter to Herder from 1779, in which he wrote "Auffallend ist es doch immer, dass unsere erste Erkenntnis des Guten und Boesen sich auf die Pudenda bezog."[25]

As we shall see soon, his conceptions of Good and Evil differ highly from the orthodox, but Christ is the "Mittelpunkt" between these two abstractions. He functions for Hamann both as a phallic and vaginal figure, the creative spirit which penetrates all matter, and the portal through which we may enter into divine vision. As we have seen, Boehme is also in accord with this conjoining of Christ and sexuality, but Blake is certainly the most vehemently outspoken of the three concerning this matter, as can be made clear from a pivotal passage in "The Everlasting Gospel," where Christ articulates "the breath of God," asserting that

> Good & Evil are no more....
> To be Good is only to be
> A Devil or else a Pharisee....
> Twas Covet or twas Custom or
> Some trifle not worth caring for
> That they may call a shame & Sin
> Love's Temple that God dwelleth in
> And hide in secret hidden Shrine
> The Naked Human form divine
> And render that a Lawless Thing
> On which the Soul expands its wing (E 521-522).

Jesus, according to the perspectives of Blake, Hamann, and Boehme, came to destroy laws of exclusive, behaviorial

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[25]It is always striking, that our first knowledge of good and evil is related to the pudenda.

holiness, which impugn the inherent sanctity of humanity, and replaced codification with emancipation, with love, the love which sanctifies and provides the expansive power of sexual intercourse. Hamann makes this clear by asserting that the sexual shame we currently perpetuate is "kein angeborener allgemeiner instinct," no inborn, general instinct, but rather an "angeerbte Sinne," an inherited sin (N III, 199), which signifies that humanity's

> ungeheure Usurpation aus dem Hoeren auf die Urkorrespondenz seines Daseins heraustrat... und der Mensch mit den uebrig gebliebenen Truemmern in trotziger Selbstverfangenheit den "Turm von Babel" zu bauen begann. Dieser 'Turmbau' zu dem alles gehoert, was der Mensch, losgeloest vom Hoeren, unternimmt, ist sein Versuch, eine 'Schuerze von Feigenblaettern' zu flechten und damit die... beschaemende Blosse seiner Existenz zu verdecken. (Baudler, 266)[26]

Social and sexual dissonance as well as linguistic cacophony are caused by a turning away from the "Urkorrespondenz" into the strictures of selfhood, an astounding parallel with the fall of Albion and the breaking off of the continuous "Blick" with God that Boehme asserts was the primal state of humanity. Hamann

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[26]monstrous usurpation from listening to the Ur-corrspondence of their existence... and man began to build the 'Tower of Babel' with the remaining wreckage in petulant self-entanglement. This 'Builiding of the Tower,' to which belongs everything that the individual separated from listening undertakes, is his attempt to weave an 'apron of figleaves' in order to conceal the shameful nakedness of his existence.

further parallels Blake here by asserting that the result of this voluntary contraction is the futile construction of the Tower of Babel, bringing to mind the Urizenic labyrinths--"The Mundane Shell"--constructed by the minions of that arch-rationalist after the fragmentation of Albion's constituent Zoas into self-righteous entities. Sexual energy is terrifying to the powers that be because it is a profound means of bridging the illusory gap between individuals which their ideologies perpetrate, and is a method of reasserting the essential divinity of humanity. The self-loathing which the church propagates as a means of justifying the necessity of its chaste intercessors is also annihilated by an acceptance of sexuality as positive, not prurient, power. The laws of the false ideology which unbridled creative and sexual energy threaten are further contrasted with Blake's belief in the "Laws of Eternity," Hamann's "Gesetz der vollkommenen Freiheit," as the modern Pharisees make that "a lawless thing" upon which the "soul expands its wing." The wings of the soul are our imaginative vision, and their strength is expanded by the exercise of our libidinal energy, an activity mandated and sanctified by the eternal laws of perfect freedom.

As we shall soon see, Blake indeed viewed Jesus' chastity as a distortion added by the subsequent formulators of "Christian" dogma, a view with which, based

on their own radical perspectives upon sexuality, Hamann and Boehme would have concurred to an extent. I think Damrosch's perceptive argument goes astray on this point when he asserts that

> The orthodox believed that Jesus was asexual; Blake answers tauntingly, 'Was Jesus Chaste or die he/ Give any Lessons of Chastity' (E 512). But it does not follow that this is a celebration of gratified desire. On the contrary, Jesus' unchastity is a feature of his implication in the fallen Luvah, in the seductive romance suggested by the alliteration in 'listens to the lureing songs of Luvah,' which leads to the ghastly sports of the Female Will. (295)

I agree that sexuality can indeed be destructive in Blake's view, but it does not follow that all sexual activity is perverted, twisted by the Female Will. Rather, imaginative vision can redeem sexual energy from that perverting will, and Blake's assertion of Jesus' unchastity is the ultimate affirmation of that possibility, rather than some some categorical condemnation of all sexuality. In any case Blake, Hamann, and Boehme viewed Christ as the ultimate proponent of spiritual expansion through sexual congress, and thus believed that their emphatically non-orthodox conceptions of the role of sexual energy in visionary warfare were justified, indeed, mandated by, the God whom, in reality, we compose. Those conceptions are united on at least three levels: by a belief in the expansive, self-

annihilating capacity of intercourse performed with love, an equal insistence upon the constrictive power of selfish libertinism, and by the conviction that the repression of sexual energy leads to physical war.

Each writer posited the imaginative power of sexuality as yet another example of the insuffiency of mere reason to embrace all aspects of human existence. We have seen Blake's fiery indictments of this insufficiency in the passage above; Boehme asserted this point in a passage astounding for its rejection of patriarchal religious ideology, one constructed from the workings of debased reason:

> Es spricht die Vernunft: ist denn Heva nur bloss aus einer Rippe aus Adam erschaffen worden, so muss sie viel geringer sein als Adam. NEIN, liebe Vernunft, dass ist nicht: Darum aber, dass Heva gewiss aus allen Essentien Adams ist erschaffen worden...und gleichwohl auch das Weib zu ihrer ganzen Vollkommenheit zum Bilde Gottes kam.... ( Beschreibung der drei Prinzipien goettliches Wesens)[27]

Mere reason cannot comprehend the complexities at work here, and so creates an oversimplified, repressive theory in order to deny the equally divine nature of the female. Koepp has delineated quite forcefully Hamann's attacks on

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[27]Reason speaks: If Eve is then merely created from Adam's rib, then she must be a much inferior being than Adam. NO, dear reason, this is not so: rather, Eve was created from all the essential elements of Adam... and in just the same manner the female achieved her full perfection in the image of God.

the inadequacy of rationalism to deal honestly with sexuality, placing against

> das Ideal der schwachkoepfigen, schleichenden, selbstischen Vernunft, die kein Deut versteht...die lebendigen schoepferischen Pudenda, die nach ihrer Aufloesung und Verklaerung schmachten. (154)[28]

That dissolution and transfiguration are effected by making love, the ultimate defeat of the creeping selfishness which reason manifests. Koepp's assertion also draws Hamann's view of sexuality and Christ closer together, for Christ is both the living spirit of prophecy and the embodiment of the creative mind which must interpret and create prophecies.

The interconnected nature which Blake, Hamann, and Boehme felt was shared by creative and sexual energy led them to reject simultaneously Gnosticism as well as the more Docetal and Pauline strands of Christianity, as we have already seen, yet they also refuted the obverse of these theologies, libertinism, the sexual debauchery which has since come to be associated mistakenly with "Romantic" poetry in particular. Sexual intercourse performed with love enables us to achieve a momentary glimpse of the heaven achievable upon this world in which barriers of communication are dismantled. This is the basis of its

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[28]the ideal of the weak-minded, creeping, selfish reason, which understands nothing... the living, creative pudenda, which longs for its dissolution and transfiguration.

dialectical inter-penetration with creative vision; conversely, the act of intercourse bereft of love effects a darkening of our selfish opacity, turning melody into dissonance, dissolution into repulsion. Baudler's analysis of this concept in Hamann's thought is quite incisive:

> Autonom in sich selbst verkrampfter und verfangener Libertinismus und leibfeindliche Gnosis werden von Hamann als die zwei Fehlhaltungen markiert, in denen im Bereich des Geschlechts das Unverfuegbare usurpiert wird. In ihnen hat sich der Mensch vom Hoeren des Wortes abgewandt, das aus seinem Ursprung zu ihm spricht: Ursprung und Ziel sind diesen Menschen leer und nichtssagend geworden und all ihr Gesuch ist nichts als 'vermummte Traurigkeit und Verzweiflung.' (265)[29]

Thus the two extremes of ethereal Gnostic thought and thoughtless debauchery take different paths towards the same destination: visionary blindness. These are two roads of excess which lead not to wisdom but its opposite, the ignorance of our essential humanity which makes a prison house of the body, one by seeking to reject sexuality entirely, the other by refusing to admit of anything beyond sexuality. Adherents of these attitudes lose all comprehension of any progressive goal and only

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[29]Libertinism, autonomously cramped up and entangled in itself, and Gnosticism, which is hostile to the body, are designated by Hamann as the two mistaken attitudes in which within the domain of sexuality the inacessible is usurped. In these two attitudes we have turned away from listening to the Word, which speaks to us from our origins: origin and goal have become empty and inarticulate to such people and all of their searching is nothing more than 'masked desolation and despair.'

heighten their own isolation, which sexual energy is so well equipped to lessen. Their abstinence or indulgence remains finally nothing more than "masked desolation and despair."

In contrast to this alienated despair, sexuality properly channeled can effect the ultimate social act, the annihilation of the selfhood, the dialectical journey from the confines of the self into physical and spiritual union with the other, as another reference from Baudler's informative study of Hamann will indicate:

> In der geschlechtlichen Begegnung wird der Mensch des anderen Geschlechts in einem anderen als das Du, das Andere, das Nicht-Ich erfahren, das mich wirklich von mich weg zu sich rufen und mich so aus meiner Verkrampfung an das eigene Ich befreien kann; [Der Mensch] geht auf einer 'Bruecke ohne Lehne' aus sich heraus zum Du des anderen sieht, dann erkennt er in tiefer Betroffenheit das andere zugleich als das urspruenglich Gleiche: als 'Knochen von meinem Knochen und Fleisch von meinem Fleisch'.... In der geschlechtlichen Begegnung von Mann und Frau findet die menschliche Begegnung als solche nur ihren konkretesten und sinnlich am staerksten erfahrbaren Ausdruck. (260-261)[30]

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[30]In the sexual encounter the human being of the other sex is encountered in something other than the "You," the "Other," the "Not-I," one which truly calls me from myself to itself and so can free me from my constriction in my own self; when the individual travels out of himself upon a "bridge without rails" to the "You" of the other, then he recognizes in deep engagement the other simultaneously as the original equal: as 'bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh'.... In the sexual encounter between man and woman the human experience as such finds only its most concrete expression, which can be experienced sensually in the strongest way.

The last sentence here merits particular scrutiny: in the sexual encounter man and woman become fully human, crossing upon a "bridge without rails" the gulf which exists between male and female. This precarious bridge offers us the annihilation of the constricted selfhood which is the chief enemy of a truly egalitarian society, and the simultaneous annihilation of the ideology which justifies and glorifies as primary virtues self- absorption, self-interest, and self-righteousness. The imaginative powers offer us, in the art which springs from their radicalizing vision, the concrete intellectual evidence of such a distorted ideology's falsity; our sexual powers offer us the most concrete and intense sensual evidence of that falsity. Hamann goes on to assert that sexuality is a highly charged form of "Sprache," is "die communicatio goettlicher und menschlicher idiomatum" (N III, 27), the 'communicatio' of godly and human idioms, "practical consciousness" in Marxian terms. Sexuality is the ultimate form of communication between two individuals, the one most fraught with the gift of our own divinity.

Blake's own view of sexuality also warred against the stultifying, hypocritical moral dogma of his day, as his work, from "London" to A Vision of the Last Judgement, illustrates repeatedly. He also viewed sexual love as a means of divine communication and self-annihilation closely linked to the imaginative powers, which finally

invest love with the comprehensive vision of our own divinity that lifts the sex act beyond a merely animalistic, sensual level. His own rejection of both Gnosticism and libertinism has been insightfully delineated by Bloom, who writes that for Blake,

> what can be discerned of the soul now is chiefly the body; if the body is inadequate, it is by necessity the way back to the soul. Asceticism is then exactly the wrong way to handle the body. It is by an increase and not a diminishment of sensual enjoyment that we can begin to expand our souls to their former dimensions. The idea of raising our intensity of perception and so triumphing over nature through nature is the central idea of the Proverbs of Hell...you do not expand your sense of touch by avoiding sexuality, but only by rising through it, and to see more, you must begin by seeing everything you can--only gratified desire can liberate us from the torments of desire. (78-89)

I would qualify this argument only by asserting that it is not "triumphing over nature through nature" that Blake emphasizes, but simply triumphing through nature. There is no reason to go "over" nature, as the generative world must be incorporated into any more comprehensive vision we achieve. Moreover, I would emphasize that gratified desire must for Blake include gratified love; otherwise all we achieve through sex is the release of physical longing, a desire which we share with animals. Worse, the desire gratified can take the form of the debased, Spectral perversion which is limned so chillingly in "London" and Visions of the Daughters of Albion.

This form of perverted desire is indicted by Boehme also, who posited an essential sexual dichotomy between the self-sacrificing love which annihilates barriers between individuals and the self-absorbed lust which strenghtens them; the former he claimed emitted an illuminating fire, the latter only distorting heat. Stoudt asserts that

> fire produces light only when it is burning; to burn there must be matter, stuff. This primitive figure is Boehme's way of describing the burning, driving source at life's center comparable to the modern libido....The will tends to posit being in order to give itself to others, to manifest itself in them; desire seeks to possess others to nourish its own being... This is the heart of Boehme's dialectic: the ultimate threat is that desire, unless checked by freedom, brings death. (224-227)

So the libido can offer either the enlightenment of sexual love or the tortuous heat of debased, selfish sensuality. In any event, the libido provides the fuel which drives our vision; it is our task to harness and burn that fuel properly so that we achieve the annihilation not of our <u>essential</u> individual identities, but those destructive selfhoods which are the obscuring accretions propagated by the dominant ideologies of doctrinal Christianity and industrial capitalism. Mere desire for Boehme brings about that clash of opposites which only heightens

isolation--death. "Free" love destroys that isolation and makes visible our essential interconnectedness.

Distinguishing between these two forms of sexual release is a central task of "Magia" for Boehme, as Grunsky has shown:

> Hier liegt die metaphysische Grundlage aller geschlechtlichen Mysterien. Hier ist nicht minder der Wurzelboden des edlen Lapis, der in der irdischen Materie verborgen sein soll. Hier hat aber vor allem auch das geistige Existenzproblem des Menschen seinen Ort, das in der Frage besteht, wie er in sich selber wieder die beiden Tincturen in eins fuehren.... (186)[31]

This crucial unification of the two "Tinctures," genders, can only be effected by the recombinant powers of the creative imagination, that "Magia" which recreates the dialectical corresponence between male and female and retrieves the lapis lazuli which gleams within our corporealities. For Boehme, the imagination can achieve this only by entering through what Blake describes as portals common to all humanity: "...they every one in their bright loins:/ Have a beautiful golden gate which opens into the vegetative world" (J 14:19-20). Recalling also Hamann's notion of the "schoepferischen Pudenda," we

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[31]Here lies the metaphysical basis of all sexual mysteries. Here is nothing less than the rooting ground of the noble Lapis, which is said to be concealed in earthly matter. Here, however, above all the spiritual existence-problem of man has its place, which is posited in the question: how can the individual recombine the two Tinctures into one?

see in Boehme's thought the beginnings of the synonomy of sexual and intellectually creative energy.

The repression of the open manifestation of both forms of this energy pervert the physical and spiritual gratification of dialectical interaction, visionary intercourse into literal warfare. Punter has shown that for Boehme and Blake "the aggressive urge is a function not of carnality but the suppression of carnality" (202), and Morton Paley has pointed out the destructiveness of this suppression in Jerusalem:

> Albion, instead of being the passive victim of the war between Urizen and Luvah as in The Four Zoas, is himself the antagonist of Luvah. In other words, the anterior myth is a "pyschomachia" describing man's repression of his sexual passion and its destructive consequences: thereafter, consummation can only be followed by guilt. The result of this in the external political world is war. (173)

Carnality unleashed evokes the essential unity underlying the superficial differences which dominant ideologies so often use to justify warfare on a literal level, the "them versus us" mentality. This mentality seeks to make sexuality the servant of those constrictive ideologies whose central means of furthering themselves is warfare. Visionary warfare, the primary weaponry of which is the constructive intercourse between the phallic "spiritual sword which lays open the secrets of the hidden heart" and the "schoepferischen Pudenda," annihilates the

differences between individuals; literal warfare, the primary weaponry of which is destructive swords and riflery, annihilates individuals because they are different.

Like Boehme and Blake, Hamann also recognized the relationship between repressed sexuality and its outlet in the perverted form of warfare, asserting that "Cunnus teterrima belli causa--Hier lag der Funke zum Zorn des Achills" (ZH IV, 365). His allusion to Horace's comment on The Iliad reveals that in restrained carnality lie "the sparks of Achilles' rage," Achilles being a character who obtains decidedly non-heroic status in Hamann's estimation. The entire debacle which Homer's epic chronicles was justified ostensibly by sexual possessiveness, the partner as chattel, while the real motive was the destruction and appropriation of "them," in this case the wealthy and powerful Trojans.

The open expression of sexuality, linked with and guided by the love which eradicates barriers instead of consolidating them, is thus crucial for the thought of Boehme, Hamann, and Blake concerning the imagination. The ultimate proponent of that sexuality is Jesus, the prophet of sheer energy and total enlightenment. The imaginative prophesies of Jesus threatened the very structure of the rationalist, exclusive ideologies shared, ironically, by the Romans and the religious leaders of the nation they

oppressed, Israel. Boehme, Hamann, and Blake saw themselves as inheritors of that radical prophetic stance and sought to further the spiritual warfare against such distorting ideologies by illuminating the essentially aligned, enlightening powers of creative thought and sexuality.

This alignment is but one example of how thoroughly each artist's vision of the imagination is grounded in the minute particulars of the material world, eschewing the ethereality of mere idealism and the abstract generalizations of absolute rationalism. The imaginative powers, properly invoked and used in conjunction with sensual perception, are essentially social, corroding the external differences between individuals, revealing the inner core of unity which we all share. This annihilation of the Selfhood does not result in the blurring or homogenizing of individuality, in the manner of a Coleridge, but leads to a recombinant, egalitarian society in which the diversity and unity of the corporeal world's multiple phenomena are retained in a dialectical tension. And although traveling down this road of excess blazed by Jesus will ultimately lead to the palace of wisdom, each artist insists we bring our tools with us, for that palace will never remain as it is, but must be constantly refined and added to. It is a domain within which each dweller has a say as to its proportions and

appearance. Its foundations rest solidly upon the earth of our world.

# CHAPTER III

## THE RHETORIC OF REVOLUTION

"Hamanns Schriften haben nicht sowohl einen eigenthuemlichen Styl, als das sie durch und durch Styl sind."--Friedrich Hegel, (Glockner, V. 20, p. 209)[1]

"Grecian is Mathematic Form Gothic is Living Form"--Blake, (p. 270)

"Die Mutter aller Wesen ist Sulphur, Mercurius ist ihr Leben, Mars ist ihre Fuehlung, Venus ihre Liebe, Jupiter ihr Verstand, Luna ihr leiblich Wesen, Saturnus ihr Mann."--Boehme, De Signatura Rerum, (10:51, p. 351)[2]

It has perhaps become a critical commonplace, but with Hegel's defense of Hamann's much maligned "style" in mind, perhaps it bears reasserting that for any literature, and especially that of the three writers at hand here, form and style are inseparable from content, yet for purposes of analysis we can, as Eagleton has repeatedly asserted, separate the two in order to better understand their interpenetrating nature. Hegel's assertion is also valid for Blake and Boehme: they do not

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[1]"Hamann's writings have not only a characteristic style; rather they are style through and through."

[2]"The mother of all essences is sulphur, Mercury is her life, Mars is her feeling, Venus her love, Jupiter her understanding, Luna her bodily essence, Saturn her husband."

have an extractable "style" so much as their work is "style through and through" The formal and rhetorical qualities of their works actually constitute content in their writings. Boehme critiques vigorously the inherited rhetoric and genres of his epoch through his assimilation and redefinition of theological,alchemical, and astrological diction, and his transformation of the standard form of philosophical studies. Hamann described this process as the wielding of "Goliaths Schwert," the sword of one's opponents, in order to decapitate their ideologies with their own rhetorical weaponry. We will see that he accomplishes this process by pushing the neoclassical emphasis upon the dissemination of erudition in literature to its farthest reaches. Moreover, while his "kabbalistische Prosa" may periodically mime the "plain style" lauded by the Enlightenment, much more often it evinces--through its syntactical complexity, its use of multiple languages and innumerable allusions--the wildest refutation of that style offered by any literature. Blake's early Poetical Sketches and The Marriage of Heaven and Hell exemplify particularly well his violent reaction against the dominant literary decorum of his day, his seizing of the "sword of destruction" proffered by Isaiah and Christ, exposing the falsity and purposely distortive nature of his deistic enemies' arguments. Like Hamann and Boehme, he too assumes and

inverts his opponents' diction and formal structures in order to effect this exposure. Through these radical attacks on false aesthetic ideologies, these writers hoped to achieve the recovery of a lost "Ursprache," a language of total and immediate communication that they believed we spoke before our fall into self-absorption. They also believed such a recovery necessitated the dissolution of the boundary between "profane" or non-Christian literature and "Holy" scripture, asserting that all literature contains within its ore a gem of christocentric truth.

Each of these visionaries sought a collective spiritual resurrection through his own visionary insurrection, an insurrection articulated in the syntax of subversion, the diction of ideological deconstruction and incessantly analytical reconstruction. Each writer's art evinces profoundly original and singular contours which may best be described as gothic in Boehme's instance, baroque in Hamann's, and neogothic in Blake's. Frye has described Blake's preference for gothic over classical art; the latter, especially in the case of architecture, seems to

> exist for its own sake. The Gothic cathedral, on the other hand, is a huge reservoir of life: the springing spires and the grinning monsters bursting out of waterspouts, corbels, misericordias and archways quiver with the exuberance which is beauty to Blake. (FS, p. 104)

Furthermore, Blake viewed classical culture as "focused not on the individual but on the state, and on the social and political duties of the citizen"; classical philosophy, newly promulgated by the Deists, was "as abstract as Classical art was derivative" (FS, p. 148).

Boehme remained ardently gothic in spirit and form in the face of a relentlessly rising classicism in his own era. The numerological schemes and alchemical and astrological catalogues which inhabit his work, and which are frequently indicted, are actually the imaginatively redeemed framework which delineates the living gothic form of his writings. The work of Hamann, by whose time the incipient classicism which Boehme faced had become predominant in virtually every aspect of culture from architecture to science, may best be described as baroque in nature. Durant has described this fascinating school of artistic thought and its penetration into the cultural world:

> Architecture was no longer Greek mathematics or Roman engineering, it was music....Designers and builders turned from stability to fluidity and rhythm; they rejected a static symmetry for deliberate disbalance and disunity; they willfully carved or twisted columns and architraves; they were weary of plain surfaces and heavy masses; they interrupted cornices, broke pediments in two, and scattered sculpture at every turn....Literature felt the baroque influence in the extravagant word play of Marini, Gongora, and Lyly, in the high-flown language of Shakespeare, in Marlowe's Doctor Faustus and Goethe's Faust. (The Story of Civilization, VII, 266-267)

If Goethe's Faust, written over two centuries after the inception of the baroque period (1550) may be seen as partially baroque in nature, then we can trace that continuing influence through the work of Hamann, whose works Goethe seriously considered collecting and editing. Just as Blake resurrected the spirit of gothic art in the face of the Deists in his country, Hamman reclaimed the baroque, refuting the symmetry and uniformity in all art which the German Enlightenment lauded. Irradiated with a gleaming array of rhetorical ornamentation, rife with a maddeningly fascinating admixture of Greek, Hebrew, Latin, French, English and his own native tongue, cemented by a syntactical mortar almost impenetrably dense at times, his "kabbalistische Prosa" bristles with the spiritual energy and intellectual complexity after which baroque architecture strives. Yet his work is completely devoid of the pointless vapidity and meaningless decoration which is so frequently the lamentable result of this school of thought. The intricate and difficult nature of Hamann's prose is ever "ein Wunder und ein Zeichen, dass Gott nicht an meiner Besserung noch an meiner kuenftigen Brauchbarkeit verzweifelt hat" (N I, p. 42),[3] is thus ever pointed towards the revelation of the immanent God,

[3]"a miracle and a sign that God never doubted my improvement or my future usefulness in his service."

and is constantly working for the creation of "eine Grammatik zur Sprache der heiligen Schrift" (Simon, p. 97).[4]

Blake, Hamann, and Boehme each considered the discordant babble of our many tongues the fallen remnants of an original, divine "Ursprache" and felt a major task of their work was to recover this original language in a form heightened by the absorption of experiential tongues. For Blake this speech could only be regained when the human senses are completely melded so that we communicate simultaneously in visual, aural and physical terms. The products of this union are the "Visionary Forms Dramatic" which enable us to communicate immediately and totally with each other. These visionary forms are now obscure to us because Albion--who in his ideal state is the matrix of composite humanity--has created a deity outside of himself to be worshipped, has turned away from the meaningful internal dialogue of eternity towards a litany of externalized abstractions, as is brilliantly illustrated in <u>The Four Zoas</u>:

> Then Man ascended mourning into the splendors of his palace
> Above him rose a Shadow from his wearied intellect of
> Living gold, pure, perfect, holy; in white linen pure he hover'd,
> A sweet entrancing self delusion, a watry vision of Man

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[4]"a grammar of the language of holy scripture."

> Soft exulting in existence in all the Man absorbing
> Man fell upon his face prostrate before the watry shadow
> Saying O Lord whence is this change thou knowest I am nothing....
> I heard the voice of the Slumberous Man & thus
> He spoke Idolatrous to his own Shadow words of
> Eternity uttering O I am nothing when I enter into judgement with thee
> If thou withdraw thy breath I die & vanish into Hades
> If thou dost lay thine hand upon me behold I am silent
> If thou withhold thine hand I perish like a fallen leaf
> O I am nothing & to nothing must return again
> If thou withdraw thy breath, behold I am oblivion (p. 327)

As we shall see in subsequent chapters, this tragic and needless externalization is the only Fall which Blake allowed and is the cause of our current limited existences. But here I would like to focus upon the implications which this turning outwards to abstraction has for speech, and thus Blake's poetry. It is through the breaking off of the internal and thus eternal dialogue within himself--and hence with the aggregate of individuals which is his unfallen state--that Albion has created the fallen language of abstraction, speaking "Idolatrous to his own shadow words of Eternity" so that these words lose their immediate and complete spiritual potency, wasted upon a false conception of a god who is in reality only the shadow of what Giant Humanity should be. And as humanity pursues its foolish notion of an external god we wander further and further into the labyrinths of

Urizen. The remaining spiritual charge of our fractured languages grows ever weaker, a the shadow of the ever enlarging Tower of Babel looms broader. This pernicious historical process Blake encapsulates in an especially pithy section of The Marriage of Heaven and Hell:

> The ancient Poets animated all sensible objects with Gods or Geniuses, calling them by the names and adorning them with the properties of woods, rivers, mountains, lakes, cities, nations, and whatever their enlarged & numerous senses could percieve.
> And particularly they studied the genius of each city & country. placing it under its mental deity.
> Till a system was formed, which some took advantage of & enslav'd the vulgar by attempting to realize or abstract the mental deities from their objects: thus began Priesthood.
> Choosing forms of worship from poetic tales.
> And at length they pronounced that the Gods had orderd such things.
> Thus men forgot that All deities reside in the human breast. (E 11, 38)

This pregnant passage indicates Blake's perceptive version of how the original ideology was formed, one which sought order through clarification and explication, and which derived its viability from its creators' "enlarged" awareness that their process of mental deification was an ideological construction. This admittance is countered by the ideologues who followed, who sought order through obfuscation and mystification, and derived their power through oppression, through attempts to abstract the

"mental deities from their objects," the signifiers from the signified. Through this process were woven the nigh impenetrable veils of predominant ideology, according to Blake, in whose pattern is contained a perverted rhetorical theory. The critical realization of this passage is that "at length they pronounced that the Gods had orderd such things," as terse an account of the origins of reification as can be found in any literature. Thus the arbitrary attributes of a particular form of poetics--attributes such as rhyme, balance--came to be viewed as absolute values handed down by the gods of previous eras. Bloom describes this negative process as "one of codifying poetry into scripture, and [it] now calls forth its contrary in Blake's Bible of Hell, or poems restoring orthodox scriptures into their primal imaginative forms" (E 808).

Hamann laments exactly this process, stressing that we must "clarify the difference between the natural use of the senses and the unnatural use of abstractions," through which our "Concepts" are separated from "Things" and both are thus maimed ["den natuerlichen Gebrauch der Sinne von dem unnatuerlichen Gebrauch der Abstractionen zu laeutern, wodurch unsere Begriffe von den Dingen eben so verstuemmelt werden...."] (N II, 207). Hamann's belief that humanity created its own fallen language by a conscious turning away from the eternal dialogue once

carried on directly with God in an "Urkorrespondenz" evinces striking parallels with Blake's view. While we had maintained this intimate dialogue with God

> Jede Erscheinung der Natur war ein Wort,--das Zeichen, Sinnbild und Unterpfand einer neuen, geheimen, unaussprechlichen, aber desto innigern Vereinigung, Mittheilung und Gemeinschaft goettlicher Energien und Ideen. Alles, was der Mensch am Anfange hoerte, mit Augen sah, beschaute und seine Haende betasteten, war ein lebendiges Wort; denn Gott war das Wort. (N III, p. 32)[5]

Every sensual facility and every stimulus, everything we saw, felt, heard, smelt or said, in short every phenomenon and ocurrence of nature was one living Word, for God himself, and thus humanity, was the Word. But, according to Hamann, we were not satisfied with individual essence unified within the matrix of God, for we turned away, outwards as in Blake, to the world of abstraction and Selfhood and thus our eternal dialogue was broken off and replaced by the fallen language of this world.

Boehme also asserts a very similar view of the fall of language, nowhere more clearly or succinctly than in Von sechs mystischen Punkten:

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[5]"Every manifestation of nature was a word,--the sign, emblem and pledge of a new, secret, inexpressible but all the more ardent unity, a communication and community of godly energies and ideas. Everything that the human heard at the beginning, saw with his eyes, examined and felt with his hands, was a living word; because God was the Word."

> Und all hier ist uns zu betrachten das Wort Gottes, der Mensch wird; so der Mensch seine Begierde derein setzet, gehet er aus der Qual aus seinem eigenen Feuer aus und wird im Gott neu geboren.... (3.23, p. 317)[6]

Humanity must seek the Eternal Word of God in order to escape the "Qual" or torture of the fires of our own contracted selfhoods. This escape can only be effected through an articulation of the desire for the retrieval of the "Ursprache." That we now exist within these limited individual forms Boehme attributes to our turning away from "der Blick" or the steady gaze we enjoyed with God, an immediate, intimate and infinite perception of our identities as individual yet united manifestations of the Divine Will. As in Blake and Hamann, Boehme asserted that our voluntary turning away from "der Blick" into the "Selbheit" of our selfish delusions of separateness caused the fall not only of language, but the creation of the entire fallen world.

Social criticism in general has justly indicted the tendency in bourgeois ideology to postulate as "natural" the chasm inherent in subject/object dualism, a dualism which with which Boehme may appear to be in agreement here. But the actual import of his view needs to be carefully distinguished from its apparent similarity with

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[6]"And here it is for us to consider the Word of God, who becomes human; as the human places his desire therein, so he goes out of the torture of his own fire and is born anew in God."

such a dualistic view of the world, one incisively critiqued by Jameson:

> [It is the] tendency of the middle classes to understand our relationship to external objects (and consequently our knowledge of those objects) in static and contemplative fashion. It is as though our primary relationship to the things of the outside world were not one of making or use, but rather that of a motionless gaze, in a moment of time suspended, across a gap which it subsequently becomes impossible for thought to bridge. (Marxism and Form, p. 185)

Boehme achieved his status in the lower middle classes as an artisan--a cobbler--and was thus intimately acquainted with the creation of actual commodities. Life was for him, whether it concerned thought, literature, or shoes, a process of making through creative interaction, of annihilating the static gulf between subject and object which bourgeoisie ideology postulates, and which Hegel so deplored. The apparent subject/object relationship of the "Urblick" was actually one of spiritually electric union, the gulf between humanity and God rife with the same charge which unites God and Adam in Michelangelo's great painting. It is through intellectual warfare, not static contemplation, that we may renew that visionary charge; in fact it is just such contemplative passivity and alienation which are the primary obstacles preventing us from reattaining that vision. Thus arduous imaginative effort is necessary in order to pass from the progressive but limited "Ringen" to the fully enlightened "Spiel" of

eternity, where all activity is both enjoyable and productive.

Thus Boehme, Hamann, and Blake evince highly individual theories which yet emerge from a central core of radical visionary thought. The specific relevance of these theories for the formal qualities of their writing lies in their clarification and justification of their works' difficulties and complexities: each sought to recover or approximate the "Ursprache" lost to humanity, a task impossible to achieve through the limited diction and staid syntax which that world had produced. Thus Blake and Boehme constantly resorted to words and phrases of their own coinage as the spiritually deadened civilizations they sought to exhort were incapable of articulating the eternal forms which their self-absorbed perspectives prevented them from even envisioning. Similarly, Hamann constantly wove a multiplicity of disparate languages into his prose in order to delineate the absolute fragmentation and incompleteness of our own speech and to adumbrate the cohesive unity of the "Ursprache."

Hence these three artists evince a basic accord with the Marxian notion of language as something which should be constantly evolving, not as something ordered by the gods of false priestly ideology. Such ideology separates essence from the "Ding an sich," sign from signifier, not

in order to deconstruct a postulated reality, but rather to construct and perpetuate a separatist, static world view. Yet while they diverge from Marx in their assertion that language must progress with an eye to the lost expressiveness of the "Ursprache," they would have agreed in general with Raymond Williams' assertion that Marx felt what we should be striving for in language during each historical transition "is a historical development of language itself: finding new forms, new means and then new definitions of a changing practical consciousness" (ML, p. 54). As I have argued above and as I hope to make clear through the course of this chapter, the "historical development of social language itself" is precisely what Blake, Hamann and Boehme each strove after. As Hamann argues, "Das Vermoegen zu denken beruht auf Sprache," the capacity to think is grounded upon language, not vice versa, as the rationalists--most specifically Descartes--would have it. For Hamann, language is thought. Both concepts are one and the same and totally inseparable: attempts to divide them result in the meaningless and useless abstractions the epitome of which Hamann saw in Kantean thought. And it is precisely and solely through usage that language/thought assumes meaning, true purpose; Hamann makes a brilliant and socially resonant analogy in his Vermischte Anmerkungen ueber die Wortfuegung in der franzoesischen Sprache:

> Das Geld und die Sprache sind zween Gegenstaende, deren Untersuchung so tiefsinnig und abstract, als ihr Gebrauch allgemein ist. Beide stehen in einer naeheren Verwandtschaft, als man muthmassen sollte. Die Theorie des einen erklaert die Theorie des andern; sie scheinen daher aus gemeinschaftlichen Gruenden zu fliessen. Der Reichtum aller menschlichen Erkenntnis beruhet auf dem Wortwechsel.... (N II, p. 129)[7]

Just as money is worthless when removed to the realms of abstract economic theory, is only valuable in its concrete and continual exchange, so is language worthless as an isolated concept, from Hamann's perspective as well as those of Blake and Boehme. But the most important statement here concerns human wealth, which is based upon the exchange of thought/language, a startling and almost word perfect anticipation of Marx's conception of "practical consciousness." This incessant striving goes far in explaining--and justifying--the occasional difficulties of their work, which seek in their formal and rhetorical strangeness to indicate the falsity of the static reality, of the untransmutable, "eternal" relationship between sign and signifier proffered by delusive ideology. Speech is for each writer, as it is

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[7]"Money and language are two objects whose study is as deep and abstract as their usage is common. Both are more closely related to each other than one might suppose. The theory of the one clarifies that of the other; they appear therefore to flow from common sources. The wealth of all human cognition is grounded upon the exchange of words."

for Marx, "practical consciousness," thought itself. Language does not exist apart from its social function: to seek to remove it to some Kantean field of isolated study is to abstract it from its essential identity and thus into meaninglessness, for even speculative thought is carried on in verbal symbols. Marx, Blake, Hamann, and Boehme all desire to empower language with the immediacy and potency of communication which the latter three believed existed in pre-history and which all four believed was achievable in a future of expanded social vision.

I have thought it profitable to refer to Frye's discussion of Blake and medieval art and to extend his architectural analogy to Boehme and Hamann because critical attacks upon the formal and rhetorical qualities of each artist's work continue to proliferate. I referred to Ferber's notion of an ideology of aesthetics in my introduction; unfortunately the works of these three artists are still devalued according to the standards of some nebulous scale of aesthetic superiority. Frye espouses a view which has contributed to Boehme's neglect and, when he is considered at all, his treatment as only an influential figure unworthy of study in his own right: Boehme's "works seem to the outsider to present a more unattractive style and more impenetrable difficulties even than Blake's...." (FS,

p. 153). Punter has intensified this stylistic devaluation of Boehme by asserting that

> Boehme thought of an ideal language called 'sensual speech,' because it was, as Norman O. Brown puts it, 'an unclouded mirror of the senses,' yet clearly he did not try to achieve this mirror-like clarity in his own works. (p. 240)

Yet this reflective clarity is precisely what Boehme sought to achieve, as we shall see further on; the intentional fallacy of this unexamined indictment of Boehme not only betrays a basic misunderstanding of his work, but is also evidently based upon Punter's use of an English translation. Aesthetic judgements should never be based upon such readings, and Boehme, more than many authors, loses a very great deal in translation. He constantly struggled, to use Punter's exoneration of Hegel's oft-lamented diction, towards "the evolution of a largely new language to cope with [his] insights, and Abrams is right to point out that Joyce is another figure who could be compared with Hegel in this respect" (p. 165). However, it would also be correct to compare Hegel with Hamann and Boehme, two writers in his own language who decisively influenced his own philosophy and rhetoric.

Hamann has suffered in similar fashion from the analysis of his aesthetics only in terms of his role as a highly yet finally merely influential figure, one whose

electrifying but ultimately murky prose style was assumed and "refined" by the later German Sturm und Drang and Romantic movements. Some critics have maintained this viewpoint to the present day and thus Josef Simon can maintain, in his introduction to what he terms Hamann's Schriften zur Sprache:

> Hamann gilt in der Philosophie- und Geistesgeschichte in erster Linie als Aufreger und Vorlaeufer der Epoche, die sich in der Literatur vom Sturm und Drang zur deutschen Klassik, in der Philosophie von Kant zum deutschen Idealismus entwickelte. (p. 9)[a]

Hamann's work, and the aesthetical form it assumed, may not be considered "primarily" as a forerunner of any ensuing literary or philosophical epoch. A writer of his caliber and startling originality demands to be considered "primarily" as the bristling individual he is. Perhaps then we will be able to shed brighter light upon his complex theory of aesthetics, the difficulties of which are all too often avoided or dismissed as the doodlings of an eccentric figure of influence, a fate which Boehme, as we have seen, has also met with far too frequently.

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[a]In the history of philosophy and in intellectual history, Hamann is viewed primarily as an agitator and forerunner of the epoch which developed from Sturm und Drang to German Classicism in literature and from Kant to German Idealism in philosophy.

Blake's aesthetics have also been the object of recent attacks, as yet another reference to Punter will indicate: in his view Blake "remains a writer with a democratic theory of the imagination who writes in a way which ensured, during the nineteenth century, that his work was read only by a handful of acolytes mostly drawn from the extreme left wing of aestheticism" (p. 249). Blake's work was lamentably neglected during the nineteenth century, yet Punter's indictment here seems to be a new variation upon a very old critical tune; apparently Blake's democratic theory of the imagination is articulated in some willfully elitist or obscurantist fashion. It seems more accurate to assign the limited public which Blake's work initially found to his contemporary arbiters of literary taste, critics such as Leigh Hunt, whose leftist political views contrasted starkly with his firmly bourgeosie aesthetics, which were so offended by Blake's poetry that he dismissed it as the ravings of a crude madman. Blake offers his own best defense in this regard, however, in the infamous letter to the unfortunate Reverend Dr. Trusler:

> You say that I want somebody to Elucidate my Ideas. But you ought to know that What is Grand is necessarily obscure to Weak men. That which can be made Explicit to the Idiot is not worth my care. The wisest of the Ancients considered what is not too Explicit as the fittest for Instruction because it rouzes the facilities to act. I name Moses Solomon Aesop Homer Plato (E 702).

This is not a justification of elitism or obfuscation, for in Blake's view, people are only "Weak" or idiotic because they choose to be: that which is grand is obscure to these people because they look on the world with the weakly charged lamps of merely corporeal vision, blind to the image of a perfectly unified society towards which Blake's own work "rouzes the faculties to act." But not everyone was as imaginatively weak as the parsons and critics of Blake's day, nor was the comprehension of his work limited to an effete band of aesthetical acolytes, as the profound interest of Rossetti and Yeats in his verse and art evinces. Blake's "way of writing," as Punter terms it, reveals not a willful, impenetrable obscurantism, but a society whose members' perceptive faculties are so limited by their belief in the correctness of a constricted view of "proper" art that they cannot apprehend the infinity and radically liberating vision which imbues visionary poetry.

Decades before Blake's letter, Hamann had sounded the same call to battle and the rediscovery of the divine "Ursprache" in his Aesthetica in Nuce:

> Wodurch sollen wir aber die ausgestorbene Sprache der Natur von den Todten wieder auferwecken?--Durch Wallfahrten nach dem gluecklichen Arabien, durch Kreuzzuege nach dem Morgenlaendern, und durch die Wiederherstellung ihrer Magie, die wir durch alte Weiberliste, weil sie die beste ist, zu unserer Beute machen

> muessen, --Schlagt die Auge nieder, faule Baeuche und lest, was Bacon von der Magie dichtet. --Weil euch seidene Fuesse in Tanzschuhen eine so beschwerliche Reise nicht tragen werden: so lasst euch einen Richtweg durch die Hyperbel zeigen. (N I, 129)[9]

It is only through arduous imaginative pilgrimages and visionary crusades to the East, the birthplace of all radical Christian prophecy, that we may recover and reawaken the extinct speech of true--that is, human--nature, what Hamann calls elsewhere "gefluegelte Sprache," the winged language of unfallen humanity. But the silk shoes of the regents of rationalism will in no way suffice for the tortuous paths of such spiritual journeying, so Hamann holds up a short cut through "Hyperbel," which in German refers not only to a galvanizing rhetorical device, but also to a pathway, especially over mountains or rivers (Joergensen, 129). Hamann goes far here in justifying not only his own prose but also the work of Boehme and Blake, whose famous Proverb of Hell, "The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom," is remarkably close in both import and diction to Hamann's assertion. Hyperbole, sheer informed excess, is necessary to counteract the torpid

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[9]"How should we reawaken the extinct language of nature from the dead? Through pilgrimages to fortunate Arabia, through crusades to the Orient, and through the restoration of their magic, which we must make our booty through old wives' tricks, because they are the best. --Close your eyes, you lazy bellies, and read what Bacon said of magic. --Because you will not wear dancing shoes over your silken feet for such an arduous journey: so let hyperbole show you a short cut."

cadences and moribund thought of Neoclassical writers; we must conquer any initial difficulties which we encounter in the writings of these men by engaging vehemently in the same imaginative journeying by which they reached the comprehensive visions they seek to articulate to us.

One more observation concerning the aesthetics of Boehme, Hamann, and Blake seems necessary before moving to specific studies of each artist: it is of course redundant to mention that all three held the Bible to be the most vital spiritual document available to humanity and they certainly elevated it far above works of antiquity, in contrast to their Classical opponents. Yet this privileging of the Bible is in no way a myopic rejection of non-Christian literature, in the manner of religious zealotry, but rather a radical incorporation of both "profane"--or extra-biblical--and Christian texts within their work, the former charged with and transfigured by the spiritual current of the latter.

Hence each of these three visionaries was adept at carrying on the wars of imagination through the appropriation of their enemies' cultural and aesthetic weaponry. Boehme achieves this on a number of levels, primarily through the assimilation and radicalizaton of the diction of empirical science, as well as of astrology and alchemy, "deforming" those terms, in the diction of the Russian Formalists, in order to expose their

ideological content of "false consciousness" while infusing them anew with his own ideology. Moreover, Boehme was highly gifted at creating wholly new terms for communicating his original visions, as in his concept of the "Ungrund," a word of his own coinage, which we would today define as the absolute void, bereft of all determination. He was particularly skilled at investing loaded words and phrases with profoundly new meaning, perhaps most strikingly in his conception of the will ("der Wille"), long a commonplace term in theosophical and philosophical discussions as well as weekly sermons. Half of Boehme's vision of the will was in at least superficial accord with the dominant religious ideology of his day: in his view there are two wills which compel every human. The first of these is the will towards darkness ("die Finsternis") and evil ("das Boese"), which are aspects of the life of the "Selbheit" or caverned man who lives only through the contracted perceptual chinks of the fallen world. Yet Boehme moved far beyond the realm of traditional organized religion, as the self-righteous rage of Pastor Richter showed, with his assertion of a second will, one which desires "das Licht" and "das Gute," or light and goodness. Significantly this goodness is internal, an inherent component of the individual and collective human souls, and has nothing to do with the hypocritical, self-serving lecturing of of clergymen

concerning the necessity of adhering to some "moral" code, which is at once imaginatively restrictive and socially oppressive.

We yearn, according to the innate dictates of our spiritual vision, after the light of the restored "Blick" with God. This is not achieved through the mere negation of the contrary will towards the fallen selfhood, but through an increasingly clear delineation of the exact dimensions and nature of that initially amorphous will through the visionary "Ringen" or wrestling with it by our will towards imaginative light. Through this wrestling we become ever more aware that we are essentiallly social entities and that the call to isolated selfhood is a call to spiritual death and social chaos, the creation of a hell of our own making; yet even if we are fortunate enough to triumph over the will towards darkness we must constantly remind ourselves that no victory is final; the dark will remains within the circle of divinity, subjugated and mastered but never annihilated. Thus Boehme's philosophy is far more than a particular rephrasing of a mere dualism. He charges a traditional religious term with radical new meaning: heretofore the concept of the human will was generally referred to in a consistently negative manner, for any human will was by definition innately corrupt and corrupting. It could only be involved in self-interest, leading away from the

stern demand for subjugation of the self to the church demanded by its chief deity, Old Nobodaddy, as well as the feudal society which helped erect him and which manipulates him from behind the veiled curtains of ideology. In Boehme's view, it is not by renouncing this world or passively accepting our positions within its unfairly structured hierarchies that we obtain spiritual rewards, but by mastering this world and transmogrifying its societal hiearchies, thereby redefining our places upon it in radically egalitarian terms. Inherent in this process is the rejection of the only real evil which Boehme allowed, and which Blake limned in The Four Zoas--the externalization of God which is the basic tenet of organized Christianity.

This rejection was perceived by the doctrinal Christianity--both Protestant and Catholic--of Boehme's day as the threat it was, for it asserts that humanity is not by definition depraved and need not turn to the gilded misguidance of the church in order to effect its own salvation. This assertion jars the ideological foundations upon which the church had built its power.

Boehme's transfiguration of extant terms also extended far into the realms of astrology and alchemy, those half-rational, half-mystical branches of empirical science. Boehme assimilated the terminology of these sciences, redeeming it by intensifying its rational import

and clarifying its mystical content so that truer vision might be attained. His frequent use of the phrases of these disciplines remains one of the most bemoaned aspects of his aesthetics. I began this chapter with a brief example of the kind of visionary catalog which has driven many a critic away from Boehme. Yet he moved through these realms where, ironically, scientific rationalists and ethereal mystics dwelt side by side, and appropriated the diction and the formal structures of both for his own visionary purposes and thus finally rejected both the abstractions of rationalism and the veils of mysticism by inverting their own devices. Wherever Boehme uses an alchemical or astrological term it is with the sole purpose of what Punter has termed the "the individuation of the universal, of the manifestation of the existential unity of the Singular and Universal" (243). Perhaps with closer examination Punter would have discerned in Boehme's work this continual effort to evoke the spiritual union between singular phenomena and the univeral sphere of the natural world. For each of his extensive catalogs, which call to mind the genealogical and geographical lists that populate Blake's major prophecies, is an attempt to assert the "ideation," to use another Hegelian term, of each minute particular in our universe, to delineate the ideal infinity within each finite phenomenon of the fallen world. The purpose of

what appears to be absolute aesthetic chaos and irrelevance to the casual reader can be clarified through further analysis. Such analysis is often rewarded in Boehme by such passages:

> Diese Welt [ist] mit Sonne, Sternen, und Elementen samt allen kreaturlichen Wesen anders nichts als ein Offenbarung der Ewigkeit, des ewigen Willens und Gemuets, und wie es im Anfange worden ist, also stehets noch in seinem Sud und Wachsen, also treibets noch zu Licht und Finsternis, zu Boesem und Guten und stehet alles in diesen ersten dreien Gestalten, als im Sulphur, Mercurio und Sal, als jeden Grad nach dem anderen.[10]

Boehme's diverse application of alchemical and astrological terms to his writing asserts that each star above us and each element within and around us is irradiate with a radically revelatory power, the capacity to unveil the eternity which stands before our anesthesized eyes. Catalogs such as this thus obtain central importance: they represent Boehme's attempts to limn the divine nature of every particular inhabiting our universe and are testament to the absolute inclusiveness of his vision; he provides these concrete particulars with an entrance forward into their own spiritual identity and

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[10]This world is, with sun, stars, and elements, together with all the beings of creation, nothing more than a revelation of eternity, of the eternal will and mind, and as it was in the beginning, so it is yet in its brewing and growing, so it drives on still to light and darkness, to evil and good: and everything stands within these first three images, as in sulphur, mercury, and salt, as every degree after the other.

thus into the collective restoration, with a clarity enhanced by experiential existence, of the dynamic "Blick."

Boehme's initially puzzling references to things such as sulphur, mercury, and "Sal," Jupiter, Saturn, and Venus, contain a final cohesive unity: this rhetorical chrysalis, its guarded beauty within. He attempts to elucidate the essentially human form of the universe--exemplified above by his assertion that the three basic elements correspond to the pyschological, emotional, and physical aspects of the individual human--and hence to transfigure the terminology he assimilates from astrology and alchemy. Such terminology is important only in its reference to the essentially human content of the elements and planets, and not in its use in arcane, pointless experiments seeking to transform lead into gold, or to forecast history by gazing into the stars. It is important here to realize that these alchemical and astrological catalogs and the subsequent profusion of such terminology, the aspects of Boehme's work most often attacked as willful obscurantism or incomprehensible mysticism, are actually nothing of the sort. These "numbers" exist not for their own sake, but are the visionary mathematics upon which the soaring gothic spires of Boehme's thought are erected. These gothic lineaments can only be apprehended by entering into

the mental wrestling which Boehme himself undertook in order to arrive at this vision and which he demands in turn from his audience.

Besides the assimilation and transfiguration of extant terminology from philosophy, theology, astrology and alchemy, Boehme was moreover particularly adept at creating startling new words to define concepts to which his own insights led him. As mentioned briefly above, the most famous of these is his concept of the "Ungrund"--literally the "unground" or "non-ground"--which refers to that void into which nothing human has obtruded. His own reading in Christian theology argued that no such concept could exist, for everything in the heavens and on the earth--and hell--had been determined--and damned--by the external deity this theology worshipped. Yet Boehme asserted that this absolute nothingness did exist, and that its powerful evil stems from the absence of determination, of definition by the human imagination. Marx would have agreed to an extent with Boehme's stressing of the necessary human determination of reality: it is the specific task of humanity to define this void meaningfully through the dialectical interaction between the mental and the material, and thereby to delineate its horrifying amorphousness. Such definition must seek to avoid the ideological distortions mentioned above by asserting

constantly that there is no external deity, but rather that humanity is God, and the only damnation we suffer is our continual refusal to annihilate the self-centered social structures perpetuated by these distortions. Again, this "Ungrund" becomes in no way the negated victim of a mere dualism. Rather it is attacked, conquered but not annihilated, reclaimed within the all-inclusive sphere of fully visionary humanity: its prior formlessness heightens our awareness of the importance of imaginative determination. Hence yet another of Boehme's "mystical" concepts reveals, when viewed from its intended perspective, an essentially anti-mystical thrust, for it is not through spiritual quietism nor ethereal contemplation that the "Ungrund" may be defined and defeated, but only by pragmatic action led by the light of dynamic imaginative vision. The hellish "Ungrund" can only be overcome and replaced with the realm of joy ("das Freudenreich"), the sole heaven Boehme allows, by wrestling with its darkness until this painful struggle can be transformed into "Spiel," sportive interaction. This realm will be constructed upon the planes of material existence. It is futile to sit by and await the appearance of some eternality in the heavens; such a paradise can only be constructed within material reality and only through our own efforts.

Another rhetorical device which Boehme, along with Hamann and Blake, absorbed from the Bible is that of the exclamatory prophetic imperative, the constant exhortation of humanity. Yet Boehme's usage of this device again differs radically from that of the theologians and clergy of his day: his exhortations invariably take the form of a biblical call to "Aufwachen," to awaken from the sleep of reason to the visionary totality which is the ripened "Fruechte" of imaginative warfare (Aurora, 8.108, 158). Adherence to moral dicta constructs no ladder to this fruit. Rather, such an ascension is effected only through mental warfare. Boehme does not desire us to repent in the traditional sense, to wallow in the guilt of incessant self-condemnation, but to awaken, to go forward into the active intellectual conflict whose result is self-affirmation and thereby simultaneously affirmation of humanity, the revelation of each individual's place within the infinite wheel of eternity.

Boehme's canon also evinces as a whole a combination of original formal innovations with an assimilation of various extant structures into a wholly new kind of work. The first instance is perhaps seen most clearly in his quite simple syntax, which resists the structural complexity his native language lends itself to. Boehme approximates the "balanced," "objective" prose thought desirable by rationalists such as Bacon and Germans of

his ilk, while simultaneously infusing that syntax with the terminology of astrological and alchemical effusions, terminology transmogrified so that it obtains visionary definition. The second formal tendency in his canon can be seen perhaps most clearly in a work such as 177 theosophische Fragen, in which Boehme responds to myriad questions formulated and assembled for him by his friends, thereby entering into a combative spiritual dialogue which defeats in terms of sheer form the solipsism of the mystics among whom he supposedly numbers.

The overt genre of Boehme's works marks another departure from the ordinary. Replete with detailed chapters and subchapters elucidating myriad points and subpoints derived from the standard forms of the philosophical tracts he had read, the content of his work is nonetheless rife with extended passages which can be described as nothing other than sheer poetry, rhapsodic articulations of his comprehensive vision, an "incorrect" formal practice disallowed by the standard practice of more "logical" philosophers. This combination of formal qualities, drawn in equal measure from rational philosophical tracts and from hebraic prophetic poetry, with its emphasis upon exhortation, parallelism, and repetition of central words and phrases, creates a dissilient new form of writing which is solely Boehme's. The latter tendency in his writing is beautifully

illustrated in a passage from Die goettliche Beschaulichkeit which also evinces the influence of New Testament cadences: "Wir sollen uns wegen der ungleichen Gaben nicht verfolgen, sonderen vielmehr in der Liebe untereinander erfreuen... wie die schoenen Blumen nebeneinander in einer Mutter sich erfreuen" (quoted in Grunsky, 52).[11] Thus the formal qualities of Boehme's canon indicate his lively awareness of the rhetorical stockpiles of his epoch, and recall, in the extent of their originality and the diversity of their ultimate unity, the divine wheel of Ezekiel which he so admired.

Hamann, who continued the same radicalization of extant genres and diction which Boehme evinces, is perhaps the supreme rhetorical terrorist which Western literature has to offer. Most often his weapon of choice is what he termed "Goliaths Schwert" (ZH I, 539), the sword with which he sought to decapitate the contentions of his gigantic enemy, the Enlightenment rationalist who is actually of the heathen's party without knowing it, an enemy personified by Mendelssohn and other members of "die Berliner Aufklaerung." We have already seen above his strong tendency towards irony; nowhere did he make a more

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[11]"We should not persecute one another because of our dissimilar gifts, but rather rejoice together in love, as the lovely flowers rejoice next to one another in a single mother."

audaciously ironic statement than in his Sokratische Denkwuerdigkeiten:

> Ich habe ueber den Sokrates auf eine sokratische Art geschrieben. Die Analogie war die Seele seiner Schluesse, und er gab ihnen die Ironie zu ihrem Leibe. Ungewissheit und Zuversicht moegen mir so eigenthuemlich sein als sie wollen; so muessen sie hier doch als aesthetische Nachahmungen betrachtet werden. (N II, 61)[12]

Hamann has thus invited his rationalist readers into a very effective trap, for his conception of the socratic manner of writing is most assuredly different from the qualities which they would attribute to it. Here he is wielding "Goliaths Schwert" with particular efficiency and the "Analogie" and "Nachahmung" which he advocates demand closer scrutiny. Punter has indicted Hamann for these aspects of his aesthetic theory, arguing that for Blake, in contrast,

> Analogy and imitation, or mimesis, are fatally connected; it would only be if the artist, or poet, had abandoned all hope of seeing into the heart of things that he would be reduced to replicating their surfaces....Art therefore has nothing to do with mimetic neutrality: it should be selective in its very essence, selective of those features which best give access to the universal form of particular experience. (161)

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[12]"I have written about Socrates in a socratic manner. Analogy was the soul of his inferences, which he embodied in irony. Uncertainty and confidence may be as characteristic of me as they desire; yet they must be considered here as aesthetic mimesis."

We must be cautious when considering Hamann's highly qualified definitions of analogy and mimesis, for he inverted the meanings of these abstractions in much the same way Blake treats angels and devils in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell: Hamann, in the best Boehmesque fashion, invests these terms with meanings radically different from their standard usage by the classicists; to him mimesis of Socratic thought means adopting the same ideologically critical mode of perception and expression which led finally to Socrates' death, forging from it one's own theory of aesthetics. One has only to read mere sentences further in the Denkwuerdigkeiten to realize how violently Hamann deflates the very rationalist tenets he appears to affirm in the above quotation. "Mimetic neutrality" of any sort is wholly absent from Hamann's thought and the aesthetics through which he expressed that thought. His purpose here is the reclamation of the essential Socratic spirit--a task Blake would undertake on Milton's behalf decades later--and its true rhetoric from the rationalists who pervert his teachings as they do Christ's, for

> Sokrates lockte seine Mitbuerger aus den Labyrinthen ihrer gelehrten Sophisten zu einer Wahrheit, die im Verborgenen liegt, zu einer heimlichen Weisheit, und von den Goetzenaltaeren ihrer andaechtigen und staatsklugen Priester zum Dienst eines unbekannten Gottes." (N II, 77)[13]

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[13]"Socrates enticed his fellow citizens out of the labyrinths of their learned Sophists to a Truth, which lay in concealment, to a secret Wisdom, and away from the

Hamann saw himself, through the process of prophetic succession, as the Socrates of his era, and those critics who have attacked his aesthetics as mere ornate sophistry would do well to notice that he regarded Lessing, Berens, and Kant, those proponents of the "plain style," wandering in the labyrinths of their false logic, as the true Sophists of his day. And just as Socrates led his fellow citizens out of the mazes of their learned Sophists, Hamann seeks to show the path towards true vision to his own contemporaries, wresting away the very tools of his enemies, skillfully brandishing "Goliaths Schwert," immersing his readers in a brilliant parody of the Urizenic labyrinths that are the consequence of sophistic thought, which is finally self-contradictory and leads only to the dead-end of a finite world. In order to reveal the single "Wahrheit" or truth of an heretofore unseen God, Hamann must completely dismantle the rationalistic ideology which perpetuates delusion and hence also the aesthetic scaffolding, the "Goetzenaltaere," from which its obscuring curtains are hung. Importantly, Socrates is reclaimed not to assert his philosophy as a self-contained, complete system in and of itself, as eighteenth century rationalists

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idolatrous altars of their pious and politically cunning priests to the service of an unknown God."

would, but as the adumbration of Hamann's own radical brand of Christianity. Conversely, Hamann views Socrates in the Blakean "diabolic sense:" Socrates' real importance lies in his identity as the typological precursor of the Hebrew prophets, the first pagan thinker to indicate to his people the truth of one God.

And it is in this radicalized sense that Hamann's "mimesis" is executed: "Wir muessen auf die blossen Bewegungen der Seele sehen; unsere Woerter sind Allegorien der Gedanken oder Bilder derselben" (N I, 18),[14] as he asserted in Biblische Betrachtungen. We must concern ourselves with the bared movements of our souls--which constitute, paradoxically, both the means and the object of vision--not merely with the pointless meanderings of the isolated reason, for our words themselves allegorize and image the motions of our intellects. Thus Hamann incorporates profane texts in the production of his Christian literature, penetrating their pagan exteriors in order to perceive the bared movement of its essential thought. Hamann believed all texts contained some nugget of typological significance, and that it was necessary to unearth that gem through intellectual struggle. I have already argued that the complex rhetoric which results from this incorporation possesses a baroque intensity

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[14]"We must look upon the bare movements of the soul; our words are allegories of thought or images of the same."

which never lapses into mere ornamentation; perhaps this is best exemplified by the stirring passage which begins Aesthetica in Nuce:

> Nicht Leyer!--noch Pinsel!--eine Wurfschaufel fuer meine Muse, die Tenne heiliger Litteratur zu fegen!---Heil dem Erzengel ueber die Reliquien der Sprache Kanaans! --auf schoenen Eselinnen siegt er im Wettlauf; --aber der Weise Idiot Griechenlands borgt Euthyphrons stolze Hengste zum philologischen Wortwechsel. Poesie ist die Muttersprache des menschlichen Geschlechts; wie der Gartenbau, aelter als der Acker: Malerey, --als Schrift: Gesang, --als Deklamation: Gleichnisse, --als Schluesse: Tausch, --als Handel. Ein tieferer Schlaf war die Ruhe unserer Urahnen; und ihre Bewegung, ein taumelnder Tanz. Sieben Tage im Stillschweigen des Nachsinns oder Erstaunens sassen sie; ----und thaten ihren Mund auf--zu gefluegelten Spruechen. (N II, 197-98)[15]

Here we can truly see Hamann's aesthetics in a nutshell and can understand why his work was so violently attacked by the arbiters of his era's Neoclassical tastes. The subtitle of Aesthetica explains that it was composed in "kabbalistische Prosa," which Joergensen describes:

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15Not lyre! Nor brush! --a pitchfork for my muse, to sweep the barn of holy literature! --Hail the archangel over the relics of Canaan's language! --upon handsome she-asses he conquers in the race; --but the wise idiot of Greece borrows Euthyphron's proud stallions for philological dispute. Poetry is the mother tongue of the human race; as gardening, older than the field: painting, --than writing: Song, --than declamation: similes, --than syllogisms: bartering, --than business. A deep sleep was the rest of our ancestors and their movement an ecstatic dance. Seven days they sat in the quietness of meditation or astonishment; ----and opened their mouths----to winged speech.

> ...Seine stilistischen Exzesse ruehren von seiner inspirierten Deutung der universalen Zeichensprache Gottes in Natur und Geschichte, in Mythologie und Poesie her, deren Sinn nur der Kabbalist erraten hat, der die als die Sprache des biblischen Gottes deutet, den die Heilige Schrift den Schluessel zum Verstaendnis der universalen ausserbiblischen Offenbarung gibt. ("Stil," 376)[16]

And it is this "universale Zeichensprache Gottes" that Hamann is concerned to recover, to make his readers realize that, in an assertion that bears considerable similarity to Blake's thought, poetry is the mother tongue of the human race and "der Gesang," the melodious song of our original speech, is older than the fragmented "Deklamation" of fallen history.

Hamann begins this passage by invoking the traditional muse to inspire him towards the articulation of his essentially Christian thought, in a manner reminiscent of Milton and anticipatory of Blake's further radicalization of this device in his major prophecies. Similarly, the work is prefaced by an extensive quote from the Odes of Horace, that ultimate paragon of of the "plain style" worshipped by neoclassicists; yet nothing could be in more intense opposition to Horation rhetoric, or its

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[16]his stylistic excesses stem from his inspired interpretation of the universal sign language of God in nature and history, in mythology and poetry, whose meaning only the Cabbalist has discovered, who interprets it as the speech of the biblical God, [and] for whom the Holy Writ provides the key to the comprehension of universal extra-biblical revelations.

eighteenth century manifestations, than the tornado of prose into which Hamann here hurls us.

We meet immediately with the exclamatory prophetic mode which Hamann maintains at a nearly constant level in his work, as well as the highly elliptical syntax which is also characteristic. Through these "dunkle Kuerze," as Joergensen terms them (Ibid, 379), these dark fragments or brevities, Hamann seeks not to obscure his points or to mystify his audience, but rather to evoke the unity which we enjoyed within the "Urkorrespondenz" by syntactically underscoring the fragmentation of our fallen forms of communication. Moreover, Hamann here attempts to stimulate his audience into the visionary warfare necessary to understand properly his works; as with Boehme, we must wrestle intellectually with the words before us in order to connect firmly the prophetic scheme which those words posit. The final effect of such elliptical prose is to "deform" traditional rhetoric and to place old concepts in strikingly new contexts, thereby shining further light upon the twisted workings of the aesthetic ideology which Hamann is attacking.

Another rhetorical device which Hamann frequently employs appears in characteristic fashion here: the extensive use of allusions to myriad sources, not merely the Bible but also virtually the whole canon of Western literature. These allusions are artfully interlaced

within the tapestry of Hamann's prose so that they illuminate simultaneously both past and present, as Joergensen has indicated ("Stil," p. 379), yet they also point to the future attainable through the pursuit of mental struggle. Hamann begins by calling for the thresher of Matthew 3:12 in order to winnow the corpus of holy literature, alluding simultaneously to Hercules' labor in the Aegean stalls, from a radically prophetic perspective. This is followed closely by an allusion to "the wise idiot of Greece," who is simultaneously Socrates and Hamann himself; Hamann viewed himself as the heir of a prophetic tradition which began with the Greek philosopher and which he must reclaim and reform into a fully Christian form, in his own "diabolical" sense, just as Blake felt himself the spiritual descendant and reformer of Milton.

The cumulative effect of these rhetorical fireworks --asserting his prose as cabbalistic, lacing his title page with quotes in Hebrew, prefacing his introduction with a quote from Horace in the Latin, then leaping immediately into the biblical exhortatory mode in his own language, covering all of this with a liberal dose of irony-- is to explode neoclassical aesthetics, erecting three of Hamann's own major tenets upon the foundation of his essentially christocentric perspective. The first, as we have seen, is the simultaneous indication of

the fragmentation of fallen language and its only salvation, the reunification of our disparate tongues in what Hamann terms their "transcendentale Wurzel" in his first attack on Kant (N III, p. 278), their transcendental root in the "Ursprache." Second, Hamann appropriates and deconstructs the basic assumptions of neoclassical erudition; finally he posits the absolute necessity of the intuitive imagination in the stead of ideal logic.

Hamann's dialectical deconstruction of neoclassical erudition is accomplished principally through the ridiculing ad absurdum of its most cherished tenet--erudition and its dissemination throughout the text. The beginning of Aesthetica in Nuce assimilates the rhetorical devices of Lessing and Mendelssohn and says in effect: "You desire erudition; here it is in its fullest ramifications. I can beat you easily at your own game and then change all the rules." Hamann achieves exactly this, for, as their own letters show, Kant and Lessing, the ultimate champions of reason in a rationalist age, were largely baffled by his cabbalistic prose and failed completely to see in it the parodic assertion of the mystification that is the result, ironically, of their own purposely homogenous prose. According to Hamann, a basic contradiction lies within any attempt to discern the workings of the universe through abstract logic, and especially within a historically particular aesthetic

attempt to mirror a conception of the world and society as already perfectly ordered: "Whatever is, is right." Hamann's attack on such a postulate is quite close here to the basic Buddhist dictum that all attempts to perceive the earth through mere reason lead finally to self-contradiction, into the sophistic labyrinths which the neoclassicists consciously eschewed but unconsciously furthered. Hamann, through his willfully heterogenous prose, evokes these resultant labyrinths.

And the only exit from these mazes of rationalism is offered, according to Hamannn, by the practical imagination and its incorporation into the intellectual warfare which enables us to demolish these walls. We might most clearly delineate his own view of neoclassical aesthetics by using a comparison from painting: from a distanced standpoint, the homogeneity and balance of rationalist prose appears as an Impressionist picture might--its lineaments clearly defined and meaningfully balanced. However, upon moving closer it becomes more apparent that such rhetoric, like Impressionist painting, is composed of a mosaic-like patchwork of myriad fragments, and when we are finally face to face with this rhetoric, have examined it from Hamann's imaginative perspective, it, like many Impressionist works, no longer holds together in any coherent pattern--all is chaos. The minute particulars of the world and experience are

wholly absent, the singular sacrificed for the sake of a general effect. Yet here the comparison breaks down, for once we have closely inspected this rhetoric, we achieve finally no heightened appreciation of its overriding unity, as we might, depending upon our tastes, upon re-viewing an Impressionist painting from a distanced perspective; rather Hamann's analysis of neoclassical aesthetics undermines its purely rational foundation and thus disperses its superficial unity forever. As we move back we no longer see the homogenous whole but chaos seeking to disguise itself as unity.

We may invert this comparison in examining Hamann's aesthetics by his own dicta. When analyzed by the rationalist ideology of aesthetics which critics have used for over two centuries, Hamann's "dunkle Kuerze" appear as mere anarchy, the apotheosis of chaos and the ultimate opposition--and justification--for their own "objective" rhetoric. But by approaching his work from an imaginative perspective, Hamann believed we might apprehend the profound spiritual unity which underlies these elliptical, rhetorically saturated syntactical fragments: the organic whole of our original "Urkorrespondenz" with God. But we must supply the spiritual synapses in order to connect these fragments, for this ancient correspondence between God and humanity lies now "im Verborgenen," hidden by the aesthetic of logic and the limitations which that

aesthetic so plainly articulates, hidden by the futile pursuit of rational discernment through Urizenic labyrinths.

We can only set these synapses in place by undertaking "die Hoellenfahrt der Selbsterkenntnis," the imaginative struggle with the hell of the isolated self-knowledge which may afford us visionary awareness of a larger social unity. Hamann's cabbalistic prose presents in contrast to rationalist rhetoric an apparently unconnected puzzle of verbal and syntactical ornamentation: yet the apparent unity of rationalist art cannot withstand imaginative deconstruction, and Hamann's prose, which demands imaginative reconstruction, yields finally a coherent whole. Thus, as we move back from our imaginative inspection of Hamann's writing, we see in it the conceptual unity it seeks to evoke, as opposed to the hellish circuitousness which Neoclassical prose, from Hamann's deconstructive perspective, embodies. This phase of "the trip to hell" affords us on an aesthetic level the higher knowledge or "Innocence," as Blake termed it, of spiritually expansive, synthetic vision. In Boehmesque terms, we pass from the torture of imaginative wrestling with these signs to the dynamic "Spiel" with the imaginative harmony they signify.

Yet Hamann was as equally skilled at imitating neoclassical prose as he was at exploding its basic

tenets; as well as his prophetic mode of irony he employed what Joergensen has termed "sokratische Parodie," which incorporates and mimes components of rationalist rhetoric and then spins them out to their ultimate self-contradiction ("Stil," 280). Perhaps no clearer example of his mastery of this technique exists than the following passage from Zwei Scherflein zur neuesten deutschen Literatur, which immediately follows a scathing jab at the contemporary predilection for the "high taste" of the collected works of M. Tullius Cicero:

> Ohne Sprache haetten wir keine Vernunft, ohne Vernunft keine Religion, und ohne diese drei wesentlichen Bestandtheile unserer Natur weder Geist noch Band der Gesellschaft. Nach der erhabenen Natur und inneren Lehren einer tiefsinnigen Philosophie stehen die Wahrheiten und Vorurtheile der Grammatik und Dogmatik in einer so genauen und entzueckenden Harmonie mit der Politik; 'Das, was auf den ersten Anblick laecherlich scheint, in den kleinsten Modification des allgemeinen Zusammenhanges zum Geheimnis der Weltweisheit wird' (N III, p. 231).[17]

This sentence mimics perfectly the restrained, regular cadences of Enlightenment rhetoric: no multiplicity of dead tongues, no complex of allusions, no exceptionally

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[17]Without language we would have no reason, without reason no religion, and without these three essential components of our nature neither the spirit or bond of society. According to the sublime nature and inner lessons of a deep philosophy the truths and preconceptions of grammar and dogma exist in such an exact and delightful harmony with politics; 'That which appears laughable at first glance becomes, with the slightest modification of the universal interrelationship, the secret of philosophy.'

jarring use of ellipsis, and the one quote from Socrates is translated into German. Yet beneath the deceptive calm of the syntax lies the visionary rage of its assertion, which directly contradicts the thought whose aesthetics Hamann is parodying; he posits again the primacy of language, practical consciousness, over the abstract reason that stems from language and thus is inseparable from it. He thereby rejects Kant's attempt to abstract language and study it as an end in itself in Kritik der reinen Vernunft, and disavows Herder's attempt to do the same in Abhandlung ueber den Ursprung der Sprache, a tendency which was a direct outgrowth of the natural religion of the deists. Without this practical consciousness, the unity of speech and rational thought, there would be no "Religion" in the sense in which that abstraction concretizes the original "Urkorrespondenz" and contrasts the dead systems of worship of the church and the deists. These three constituents of nature provide us with the spiritual outline of the true social nexus which can bind us together within a "religion" that shows "whatever is" could be profoundly wrong.

Such a vision replaces the separatist, static "Great Chain of Being" promulgated by rationalists with an egalitarian connective structure. For Hamann, the lessons offered to us by a more profound and deeply rooted philosophy than those of antiquity or their contemporary

mutations reveal that grammar, dogma, and politics are all interrelated and exist within a delightful harmony in direct contrast with the ideological knot which binds them now. Rather, in the paradoxical fashion typical of Hamann, he argues for the attainability of a grammar without a restrictive syntax, dogma without morally prescriptive rules, politics without selfish corruption--each can and should be a fluid articulation of the "Urkorrespondenz" which we could reestablish immediately, not a weapon of the machinations of prevailing ideology. And Hamann's delineation of this harmony contains, in its reference to Socrates, a final justification of the cabbalistic prose which he employs elsewhere in his canon: from a merely rationalist perspective, this harmony--and Hamann's writing--appear "laughable," yet with the "smallest modification" of these "universal interrelationships," an imaginative "re-vision" on an intellectual and practical level, the deepest secrets of the knowledge of the world become apparent to us, just as Hamann's writing is rendered lucid.

Often attacked for its supposed artistic inferiorities in much the same fashion that the works of Hamann and Boehme are, Blake's canon as a whole represents, as do those of the two German visionaries, a unified negation of the dominant ideology of aesthetics in his own era. From the appropriations of the Augustans and

the Graveyard school which imbue Poetical Sketches, to the radicalization of nursery rhymes and Protestant hymns which informs Songs of Innocence and Experience, to the transmogrified form of prophetic epic which is Jerusalem, his works evince a constant concern with the assimilation and transformation of the rhetorical modes of the past and present. Yet perhaps no single text of Blake's exemplifies this concern more intensely or brilliantly than that diverse and dissilient aesthetic amalgalm, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, which evidences an incredible dissolution of formal, rhetorical, and generic boundaries into a unified whole that constitutes a wholly new type of literature.

But before moving to a discussion of that work, I would like to comment briefly on the attacks on aesthetic ideologies noted in Poetical Sketches, which is often overlooked in critical analyses of Blake. The poems contained here are frequently cited as apotheoses of and farewells to the tones and styles of poetry championed by the Augustans, and those later aesthetic concerns propounded by the Graveyard School, whose gothic excess Blake admired as a young man. I agree with such assertions, but regret the accompanying oversight of these poems' implicit indictments of the ultimate superficiality of such aesthetic modes; Blake is not merely bidding such

modes adieu, but is also pointing out why he relinquishes Pope and Gray as stylistic mentors.

Two songs, "How Sweet I Roam'd from Field to Field," and "My Silks and Fine Array," certainly the most frequently cited poems in the work, not only evince Blake's apotheosizing of outworn tradition; contained within the texts are explicit attacks upon that tradition. The former poem makes this clear when the speaker, after encountering the "prince of love," spouts flowery rhetoric which, by the poem's end, indicates just how confining such tired rhetoric is:

> He shew'd me lilies for my hair,
> And blushing roses for my brow;
> He led me through his gardens fair,
> Where all his golden pleasures grow.
>
> With sweet May dews my wings were wet,
> And Phoebus fir'd my vocal rage;
> He caught me in his silken net,
> And shut me in his golden cage.
>
> He loves to sit and hear me sing,
> Then, laughing, sports and plays with me;
> Then stretches out my golden wing,
> And mocks my loss of liberty. (E 413)

We see here a fascinating early treatment of one of Blake's major themes, the repression resultant from possessive love, anticipating several of the Songs of Innocence and Experience as well as later manuscript poems such as "The Mental Traveller." The "silken net" and "golden cage" are interestingly enough manipulated by the "prince of love," when such devices will be wielded almost

exclusively by Enitharmon and other negative female characters in Blake's later mythology. But there is an underlying concern here with aesthetic matters: the specious radiance of the prince of love, like the false beauty of the second stanza, in which the speaker is virtually buried under mounds of flowers plucked from the pernicious gardens of tired rhetoric, saturates the wings of original poetic inspiration so that they can no longer fly. These spurious aesthetic blossoms are then revealed to be the refined entrapments from which the creative mind must escape if it is to regain its "loss of liberty." Thus Blake effects a double-edged attack upon both the evils of possessive love and oppressive aesthetics.

This bifurcated indictment is extended in the next song, "My Silks and Fine Array," which refers not only to the affected clothing of the overwrought speaker, but also hearkens back to the "silken net" of the previous poem, a snare which is willingly worn here. The "fine array" of exaggerated rhetoric is but a clothing for the internal hollowness, the absolute dearth of significant content which often lies within such rhetoric and this poem. The "languish'd air" of the speaker and such aesthetic modes reveals a destructive self-absorption and self-pity; the speaker waxes melancholic upon his imminent death by heartbreak, claiming "Such end true lover's have," and then, ironically, proceeds to indicate his falsity by

lapsing into a litany of paranoid possesivness and despair. The final stanza is particularly fine in limning Blake's rejection of both the melancholic self-indulgence and moribund rhetoric of the Graveyard School:

> Bring me an axe and spade,
> Bring me a winding sheet;
> When I my grave have made,
> Let winds and tempest beat:
> Then down I'll lie, as cold as clay.
> True love doth pass away! (E 413)

"True love," in the decidedly false sense evinced here, and the poetic style used to express it, pass--thankfully--away.

This conscious appropriation of the diction and syntax of such melancholic poetry is continued in "When Early Morn Walks Forth in Sober Grey" (E 416-17), which echoes and extends the sentiments expressed in the above poem. The lovelorn speaker here, in search of his "black ey'd maid," feels compelled to "curse [his] black stars, and bless [his] pleasing woe." The sentimental pleasure taken from "pleasing woe," and, worse, the willingness to curse rather than redirect one's fate are negative and hindering perpsectives according to Blake's thought. The distorting potential of such perspectives is fully realized in the demented raving of the final stanza:

> O should she e'er prove false, his limbs I'd tear,
> And throw all pity on the burning air,
> I'd curse bright fortune for my mixed lot,

And then I'd die in peace and be forgot.

Most striking about this passage is the hilarious devastation of the melancholic self-importance of the Graveyard School, whose relative obscurity in our own time has indeed fulfilled Blake's prophecy that it will "be forgot": after the histrionics of accusation and revenge, breast-beating and hair-tearing, and cursing fortune rather than himself for his "mixed lot," this bombastic lover can "die in peace and be forgot." It is as if what matters is not the substance of his actions, but the inflated drama of his stereotypical response to what he perceives as his fate. This dullard fails to see that all of existence is comprised of a "mixed lot." Moreover, in his self-righteousness and vindictive sense of personal justice there are anticipations of both the possessive rage of Bromion and the ineffectual self-pity of Theotormon in Visions of the Daughters of Albion.
But most importantly, we must apprehend Blake's masterful mimicry of the aesthetic and conceptual ideologies he is attacking here. This poem could not have been written by a mere inspired novice who had yet to achieve his own brand of vision; conversely, the emergence of his own singular perspective is adumbrated through his devastating irony and the brilliant evocation of the very ideologies he indicts.

Traditional notions of the source of poetic inspiration are further rejected in the song beginning "Memory, hither come," which begins with a seemingly serene affirmation of the powers of remembrance, yet the first stanza is also inhabited by "sighing lovers," arousing suspicions which are fulfilled in the second stanza:

> I'll drink of the clear stream,
> And hear the linnet's song;
> And there I'll lie and dream
> The day along:
> And, when night comes, I'll go
> To places fit for woe;
> Walking along the darken'd valley,
> With silent Melancholy. (E 415)

There is a contemplative complacency here antithetical to Blake's central thought, which is centered on the dynamics of creative activity. In an indictment not only of conventional calls to the muses of memory for inspiration but also, in a stunning anticipation, of the central tenet of the "Preface" to Lyrical Ballads, Blake attacks simultaneously both dependence upon recall and solitary rumination amongst the vernal beauties of nature. Such dependences lead again only to the arousal of that most myopic of emotions, Melancholy. Of course this attack on memory is intensified in the famous battlecry "To the Muses" (E 417). The first three stanzas assert that "Whether on Ida's shady brow.... Or the green corners of the earth... [or] Beneath the bosom of the sea...." the

"Fair Nine" wander is completely irrelevant for the poet of dynamic vision in Blake's era, for reliance upon these muses leads only to what Joyce Cary would term almost two centuries later "the grave of Memory." Moreover the staid cadences and leaden modifiers here mirror the static nature of such thought, and the poetry which expresses it; its "languid strings do scarcely move!" and the "sound is forc'd, the notes are few!" (15-16). Thus the young Blake proves himself adept at creating mimetic rejections of the aesthetics within whose "golden cages" and "silken nets" he felt entrapped, of the "nervous verse," "tinkling rhimes, and elegances terse" which he attacks in "An Imitation of Spenser" (E 420, 11-19).

These rejections collapse generic boundaries in the prose pieces which dwell alongside the poetry of the Sketches. These fragments anticipate, in the audacity and tone of their content, the prose "Memorable Fancies" of The Marriage while extending Blake's scathing attack upon predominant aesthtetic ideologies. In "Contemplation," the pathetic speaker has deified that abstraction and makes the fatal mistake of supplicating his self-created externalization for understanding:

> Heavenly goddess! I am wrapped in mortality, my flesh is a prison, my bones the bars of death, Misery builds over our cottage roofs, and, Discontent runs like a brook. Even in childhood, Sorrow slept with me in my cradle; he was my school-fellow: thus he was in my steps and in my play, till he became to me as

> my brother. I walked through dreary places with him, and in church-yards; and I oft found myself sitting by Sorrow on a tomb-stone! (E 442)

Here is a clear anticipation of the "cavern'd man" of Europe, who accepts the limited vision of corporeality. Furthermore, the inflated histrionics of this "dramatic" prose stylistically mirror the Graveyard writers while the content of the last sentence is an ironic indictment of their affected melancholy.

Blake, in the Poetical Sketches, is not paying tribute to his influences nor merely casting off those influences in order to forge ahead in creating his own vision. He simultaneously epitomizes and indicts the pernicious thought he saw in eighteenth-century poetry, as well as the aesthetic modes which articulate that thought. These poems are not mere formal exercises, as is often argued, but constitute the formation of one pole of Blake's emergent dialectic. Here we receive no clear indication of exactly what shape that dialectic will take, but we can see unmistakably what shape it will not assume--that of the recent poetry whose aesthetic ideologies he so skillfully assimilates and deflates.

While the baroque lushness of The Book of Thel and the radical simplicity of Songs of Innocence and Experience extend the development of Blake's original thought, certainly, in terms of aesthetic independence,

none of his earlier works is more important than that astounding amalgam The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, which represents, contary to most critical opinion, a radical attack on "angelic" proponents of both religious and aesthetic orthodoxy, whose arguments are finally cleansed and fused with the hellish energy of Blake's own perspective. Here Blake does not, as Bloom has argued, "cast off outworn influences" (E 898), but assimilates those influences into his own fully forged vision, comprising radicalized formal and conceptual elements of Swedenborgian, biblical, Lockean, Dantesque, and Shakespearean modes of discourse. The resultant iconoclastic work exemplifies the beauty of exuberance, the "eternal delight" available from the deconstruction and reconstruction of aesthetic forms.

Blake wreaks rhetorical havoc from the work's onset, as the difficult "Argument" exemplifies. As Bloom has shown (E 337), the second stanza clarifies the cyclical obliquity of the poem, where the shift to the present tense indicates the simultaneity of the roses of Isaiah 35:1-2 being planted amidst the thorns of 34:13; the blossoming vigor of visionary literature bursts forth even amongst the vitiating thorns of current aesthetics, indicating the immediate availability of intellectual and formal expansion upon the "barren heath" of a world absorbed in moribund classical rhetoric. On this heath

"Sing the honey bees" of artistic industry liberated from the strictures of such rhetoric, an anticipation and amplification of the apparently platitudinous Proverb of Hell which asserts that "The busy bee has no time for sorrow" (E 7:11). Those busy with the construction of new modes of visionary articulation have no time for the stylized despair of the imitative contemplatives of the Graveyard School. Yet now the "sneaking serpent walks" in the "mild humility" of art sanctioned by that moribund aesthetics, while the "just man" or visionary artist "rages in the wilds," accompanied by the lions of creative wrath, a clear allusion to the condemnation and bewilderment which Blake's work aroused precisely because he rejected the mild humility afforded by adherence to such aesthetics.

Thus "The Argument" represents not only the reference to the literal warfare of Blake's era which Bloom and Erdman have so skillfully explicated, but also, when we consider it within the complex whole of The Marriage, to the warfare of artistic theory which Blake waged so intensely upon the inherited stylistic skeletons of his age. Yet the two levels of strife are for Blake inseparably intertwined: the roaring and writhing Rintrah who looms both above and below "The Argument" symbolizes not only revolutionary France but also the prophetic artist who rages for new, more vital forms of discourse.

Similarly, "the villain" represents both reactionary England and the poet who willfully adheres to the limited rhetoric of the past, refusing the struggle necessary to assimilate and transform that rhetoric into forms capable of conveying visionary advancement. Hence Rintrah "shakes his fires" of revolutionary political and aesthetic energy in the "burdend air" of an England sodden with reactionary theories of society and art. The "hungry clouds," which are hungry for substantive change in these realms, swag impatiently on the deep of this intellectual abyss, for the mindless bloodshed which accompanied the French Revolution--and the monarchal British politics that opposed it--are both directly tied to the neoclassical rhetoric which articulates, ironically, both positions, propagating not a questioning of political motive, but faith in its inscrutable wisdom and total justice. Thus a change in aesthetics necessitates an equal transformation of content.

Blake's lively generic admixture begins with Plate Three, in which he moves from cryptic poetry to a stylistic and tonal emulation of Enthusiastic prose, prophesying the return of the just man, the new Adam, into the new Edom. But he moves to a sober, Boehmesque redefinition of good and evil in the remaining lines, manifesting his reclamation of extant terminology from a perverted orthodoxy and forming it to suit his own

visionary purposes. This modulation from an Enthusiastic to a more ostensibly rational mode of discourse is extended in Plate Four, ironically articulated by "The Voice of the Devil." Here Blake, in a fashion that echoes the passage from Sokratische Denkwuerdigkeiten examined above, and is reminiscent of his early tracts "There is no Natural Religion" and "All Religions are One," subverts the ultimate conclusions of Lockean logic by appropriating and subverting its "objective," "logical" rhetoric. The notion of a soul/body dualism--and implicitly, one of style/content--is annihilated in a brilliant stylistic parody of the school of thought whose basic assumptions Blake is undercutting through the almost syllogistic development of his own tenets. The inseparability of a particular philosophy from the form which it assumes is further underscored in the famous redefinition of Milton's God on Plate Five; Milton's Trinity is but a "Ratio of the five senses" and thereby, so is the rationalist aesthetic by which he presented that Trinity. Milton was a poet, in Blake's estimation, whose vision often outstripped his limited rhetoric; yet his slavish imitators merely continue to expand the "Vacuum" which inhabits the center of his theology and his theory of aesthetics.

The contained irony of these plates, whose structure is overtly logical and content is radically visionary, explodes with the first "Memorable Fancy," which

immediately defeats the reader's expectations of continued "rational" discourse. These fancies are not only references to Swedenborg's "'memorable relations,' literalistic reports of what Swedenborg claimed to have experienced in the Eternal world of his visions" (E 898), but also what have to be the most radical, allusive departures from the genre of travel literature ever written, outstripping even Gulliver's Travels in their forays into the realms of artistic vision. Blake returns from hell with some of the devils' Proverbs on "the Abyss of the five senses"; this abyss contains more than a passing reference to Boehme's "Ungrund," or void bereft of all creative determination. After aligning his own mode of production with the "corroding fires" of hell, which strip away the veils of ideology to reveal the corrupted methodology beneath, Blake presents his audience with the Proverbs themselves, which mark another generic shift within the work.

The epigrammatic, elliptic intensity of these Proverbs, so frequently commented upon, need not be rehearsed in detail here, but I believe it worthwhile to relate several of them to the context of my discussion. "The road of excess," of exuberant creativity affirmed by Hamann's "Hyperbel"--vitally distinct from melancholic, self-absorbed histrionics--leads, importantly, not to an absolute worship of the creative process for its own

sake, as some absolute goal in itself, but to the "palace of wisdom," to a definite end of higher individual knowledge. Blake thus distances himself from the later Romantics, within whose poetry the notion of process will assume nearly ultimate importance. His aesthetic dialectic is not geared towards endless deconstruction and reconstruction, but aimed at a final goal of reintegrated humanity.

The famous axiom "Prisons are built with stones of Law, Brothels with bricks of Religion" (E 8:21), also contains a deep aesthetic resonance which hearkens back to Poetical Sketches; not only literal but artistic prisons are built with the stones of laws both social and rhetorical, and the inmates of the latter are held within their narrow cells by their own "mind-forg'd manacles." "The roaring of lions, the howling of wolves, the raging of the stormy sea, /and the destructive sword. are portions of eternity too great for the eye of man" (E 8:26-27) not only recalls the "raging" of the just man and his companion lions in "The Argument" while looking forward to the famous "The tygers of wrath are wiser than the horses of instruction" (E 9:44), it also contains an astounding parallel with Hamann's use of "Goliaths Schwert" of ideological deconstruction. Moreover, the sword of destruction that Blake here affirms anticipates

that rousing call to warfare against delusive aesthetic ideology in the "Preface" to Milton:

> Rouze up O Young Men of the New Age! set your foreheads against the ignorant Hirelings! For we have Hirelings in the Camp, in the Court, & the University: who would if they could, for ever depress Mental & prolong Corporeal War. Painters! on you I call! Sculptors! Architects! Suffer not the fashionable fools to depress your powers by the prices they pretend to give for contemptible works or the expensive advertizing boasts that they make of such works; believe Christ & his Apostles that there is a Class of Men whose whole delight is in Destroying. We do not want either Greek or Roman Models if we are but just & true to our own Imaginations, those Worlds of Eternity in which we shall live for ever; in Jesus our Lord. (M I, 95)

Besides underscoring Blake's belief in the pernicious connection between aesthetic ideologies and physical warfare, this passage asserts the destruction of such false ideologies as an essentially Christian act. He surely numbered himself and all truly prophetic artists among that "Class of Men whose whole delight is in Destroying." Blake sees Christ's rejection of hebraic law as relevant to every facet of human existence, and viewed his own attack on the deistic decorum of his epoch as one of his most basic tasks as a true visionary. And the proverb deepens additionally Blake's allusion to Isaiah, here 34:5-6, in which the prophet claims the "sword of the Lord," which is "bathed in heaven." I think an important unity of visionary thought is revealed by two of its leading proponents choosing the same symbol to

describe their own attacks upon the dominant aesthetic ideologies of their epochs. Significantly, that Blake places this "destructive sword" within the context of unheeded prophetic rage noted elsewhere in the work, clearly aligns it with "Mental Fight" as opposed to the "Strife of Blood" which ends Europe.

Three more proverbs seem to hold a particular aesthetic significance, in addition to their more immediately apparent meanings: "The cistern contains: the fountain overflows" (E 8:34), "Expect poison from the standing water" (E 9:45), and the famous "Exuberance is beauty" (E 10:64). Blake's allusion to a central tenet of Platonic theory in the first proverb serves of course as a metaphor for the creative process in general and this work in particular, the energy of which overflows the cistern of extant literary decorum; its sheer exuberance is beauty, and vice versa. Within this energetic loveliness is the poison of the standing water which cannot overflow the rusting cistern of classical rhetoric. The danger of such stagnation, and the positive nature of exuberance, are underscored in the Proverbs' concluding exclamation "Enough! or Too much," which implies that our insatiable creative appetites will never be satisfied with less than infinity.

The remarkable audacity of Blake's conversations with Isaiah and Ezekiel in the second "Memorable Fancy" is also

fraught with aesthetic import. In a seminal passage on Plate Fourteen Blake asserts that he will eradicate erroneous notions of a soul/body dualism through the "corrosives, which in Hell are salutary and medicinal, melting apparent surfaces away, and displaying the infinite which was hid." These corrosives refer simultaneously to his anti-ideological vision and the method by which that vision is expressed, his own original method of printing. His corrosive assertions will cleanse "the doors of perception" of their ideological accretions, a necessary act, for "man has closed himself up, till he sees all things thro' narrow chinks of his cavern." This spiritual contraction, described in a metaphor which anticipates the "Preludium" of Europe, is also necessarily political and aesthetic, and represents Blake's continued urging for poets to throw of the "silken nets" and "golden cages" of an outworn ideologies first begun in Poetical Sketches.

Blake's outrageous parody of travel literature intensifies in the third "Fancy," where he journeys to "a Printing House in Hell" and views the method in which "knowledge is transmitted from generation to generation," thus emphasizing at once both the spiritual allegory and historical reality of the developing means of production. "The lions of flaming fire" who labor in the fourth chamber melt the spurious ornamentation of "gold silver &

precious stones" which the Viper in the second room tacks upon the raw material of creativity. Purging extraneous and unexpressive dead weight from the essence of vision, the lions thereby limn a paradigm for the historical process by which each successive generation of artists can and must, for Blake, alter and create their own permutations of extant aesthetic ideologies if they are to manufacture viable, visionary art.

This fancy concludes with the famous meditation upon the eternal energy which Blake names the "Prolific" and its circumscribing form, the "Devouring." What is crucial in terms of Blake's conception of art here is the particular form which the "Devouring" assumes; a profound chasm exists between definition and stultification--formal qualities should never be so staid or strictured that they devour all meaningful import within the Prolific. The result is a hollow cage of golden rhetoric bound together with silken knots. This conclusion also extends Blake's identification of himself and his theories with Christ the Destroyer, who "came not to send Peace but a Sword," a sword which Blake has taken up and wields quite deftly here in his battle against finely wrought ideological cages.

The following "Memorable Fancy" is concerned not merely with the religious cannibalism which has resulted from the "seven houses of brick" (E: 20) or the original

churches, but also with the deforming, pernicious results of literary inbreeding which constitute one ramification of this horrific scene. These fiendish monkeys, "bound by the shortness of their chains," the fetters of undigested religious and aesthetic thought, first couple with, then devour and dismember each other, finally turning upon themselves. Blake thus indicates the absolute intellectual perversity which underlies mindless conformity to any prescripta, whether they refer to morality or creativity. In this case he attacks more directly current literary decorum, which is based upon an uncritical acceptance of Aristotle's Analytics, delineating the narrow chinks of rationalism upon which that decorum is founded. This pungent Fancy is punctuated by one of Blake's most frequently quoted tenets, "Opposition is true Friendship," which, like all of his assertions, obtains significance on a variety of contextual levels. For the purposes of my discussion, I would emphasize that one overt implication here is that Blake considers himself, as visionary reviser, the Contrary which defines the blank space of its opposition, a truer friend to Pope and Milton than their abject worshippers, slavish imitators, or their most ideologically biased defenders (he would certainly number C.S. Lewis among the latter). The discussion on Plate 21 of the relative merits of the work of Boehme, Paracelsus,

Dante, and Shakespeare examined in my first chapter concludes this journey, which is followed by the final "Fancy."

Blake continues to intensify the role of Christ as destroyer of distorting ideologies in the concluding "Fancy," as an insightful Devil illustrates how Jesus broke every Commandment and "acted from impulse; not from rules," an assertion which contains both Blake's mandate for ideological deconstruction and his prime energy in constructing his own--the impulse of creativity liberated from dead forms of poetic discourse. According to that impulse his "Bible of Hell" will take its distinctive shape. This final "Fancy" ends with one of Blake's most resonant proverbs: "One Law for the Lion & Ox is Oppression" (E 24). Here "Law" expands the implications of "Bricks of law" from the "Proverbs of Hell" far beyond the realm of the merely legalistic, so that term refers to any type of reductive, artificial stricture, especially one whose artificiality is not recognized but is postulated as a divine and absolute truth. Laws must accord with historically specific circumstances and needs, not the reverse, as is the case now; their efficacy and adequacy are to be judged by the extent to which they serve those needs and circumstances.

Blake further defines the destructive effects of seeking one law for all phenomena and simultaneously

enriches the aesthetic diversity of The Marriage by concluding the work with A Song of Liberty. This poem, whose sentences are, interestingly, numbered in the manner which Boehme used for his own prose, is not only an indictment of contemporary political struggle, but also of the fight against the rhetoric which the dominant factions embroiled in that struggle employ in their perpetuation of destructive cultural formulae. Blake's overriding and powerful assertion is that we cannot change one aspect of the prevailing ideology significantly without necessarily removing one of its basic props and thus endangering the stability of the entire obscuring structure.

Poetical Sketches and The Marriage of Heaven and Hell evince Blake's skill in the art of aesthetic warfare and align him with Hamann and Boehme in their radicalization of orthodox terminology and their innovations in formal and rhetorical structures. Blake, Hamann, and Boehme were each equally adept at seizing the sword of the aesthetic ideologies they attacked, sharpening its edge and turning it upon the enemy. Their formal, rhetorical, and generic deconstructions in this regard paved clear paths for the construction of their own more viable, energetic, and expressive ideologies of art; those complex and vibrant ideologies are inextricably linked to their radical thought, forging double-edged swords of form and content to better advance visionary warfare upon the plains of reality.

# CHAPTER IV

## ETERNALITIES OF DYNAMISM

Gleichwie mit Jakob in dieser Nacht ein Mann rang; bis die Morgenroete anbrach; also auch rang... die Liebe Gottes in unserer angenommenen Menschheit, bis die Liebe der Gnaden durch den Zorn brach und der Morgenstern goettlicher Liebe in der Seele aufging und den Zorn ueberwand, wie der Text im Mose allhier gar verborgen ist, und doch ganz klar in dieser Figur deutet. (Mysterium Magnum, 60:17)[1]

Wir sind alle faehig, Propheten zu seyn. Alle Erscheinungen der Natur sind Traeume, Gesichter, Raetsel, die ihre Bedeutung, ihren geheimen Sinn haben. Das Buch der Natur und der Geschichte sind nichts als Chyffern, verborgene Zeichen, die den Schluessel noethig haben, der die heilige Schrift auslegt und die Absicht ihrer Eingebung ist. ("Brocken," N I, 308)[2]

The Four Living Creatures Chariots of Humanity Divine... going forward forward irresistible from Eternity to Eternity. (J 98: 24-27)

For Blake, Hamann, and Boehme, history is a dialectical process of dynamic clarification. As Hamann above asserts, we are all capable of discerning the essential

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[1]Just as a man wrestled with Jacob in this night until the dawn broke; thus wrestled... God's love in the humanity we assumed, until the love of grace pierced rage, and the morningstar of divine love infused his soul and conquered rage. Just so is this text concealed in Moses, and yet its meaning is completely clear in this figure.

[2]We are all capable of becoming prophets. All appearances of nature are dreams, faces, riddles, which have their meaning, their secret sense. The Books of Nature and of History are nothing but concealed signs, which demand a key, a key which the holy scripture provides and which is the intention of their inspiration.

content of past, present, and future histories and weaving from that discernment a pattern of radical prophecy. For each writer, the events of history, profane and sacred, banal and profound, must be pierced beyond their surfaces, beyond the encrustations manufactured in no small degree by religious and political ideology, in order to reveal their prophetic content. Thus the process of history is not something which we must blindly accept as given, as something which merely occurs, but something humanity is empowered to create and transform. Boehme, Hamann, and Blake maintain the proper perception of historical material demands an anti-ideological act. Despite this overt tendency in their writings, they have each been attacked by critics who wrongly perceive their visions of history as essentially elitist and traditionally Romantic, as initially escapist and finally incoherent, offering up immaterial, totalizing Nirvanas based in solipsism.

After examining these indictments in detail, I will argue that they are essentially distorting and in no way aligned with the historical visions proffered by Blake, Hamann, and Boehme. For these artists, the process of history must be grappled with dialectically, something that, as the epigraph above shows, we are all capable of doing. They believed that history must be stripped of its ideological veils initially at an individual level, but

that this step must be followed by a subsequent turning outwards to society, by the articulation of that newly discerned meaning to everyone. Hence mysticism is again precluded by the very core of their historicisms; revelation occurs at an initially singular plane, within every individual awakened to imaginative perception, but its communicability at the social plane is the final, supremely important step. The intricate patterns of diverse histories all relate back to central truths revealed in the Bible, yet these truths are the property of humanity, not mysterious realms whose essences are to be divulged properly only by elite seers and ordained priests. These artists believed that <u>everyone</u> could be a historical visionary, and did not assert themselves as divinely chosen, superior seers, in the manner of St. John of the Cross or Plotinus.

Christ apotheosizes the individual, imaginative response to the process of history and sanctions the imperative importance of bypassing priestcraft and its holy mysteries in order to transmogrify existent social structures. Thus Christ also embodies simultaneously the radical social response subsequent to the proper perception of historical patterns at an individual level. Indeed his very existence fulfills and opposes dialectically the legalistic tenets of the Old Testament;

to replace the corrupt peace wrought by the Sadducees and Pharisees he brought a sword of insurrection.

The radical prophetic spirit epitomized by Christ infuses the historical visions of Blake, Hamann, and Boehme. Boehme, who has been indicted for his "lack of a sense of history" (Punter, 42), was, conversely, highly concerned with modes of production and their dialectical transformation, as his most essential dictum, the imperative mental "Ringen" or wrestling with the apparently disconnected events of history, illustrates. Similarly, Hamann posited, throughout his canon, two main perceptive modes concerning history, the "Geist der Beobachtung," and the "Geist der Weissagung." The former, also termed "das philosophische Genie," is the purely logical faculty, the "spirit of observation" that receives the stimuli of quotidian existence and shapes them into an immediately functional order. As we shall see from an examination of seminal texts in this chapter, this faculty interacts dialectically with the "spirit of prophecy," also termed "das poetische Genie," the perceptive mode which fuses the immediate patterns wrought by the observatory powers with past and future histories in order to invest each moment with a radically expanded horizon, a heightened consciousness of our own transformative powers over time. The "disiecti membra poetae," as Hamann repeatedly describes the disconnected

human race, are to be recollected through this dialectical interaction between the poetic genius and the philosophical genius. Blake also viewed history as a process which must be grappled with dialectically, something whose true import can never be apprehended by the Urizenic powers of reason. Rather Urizen must work with Urthona, the prophetic spirit, and the other Zoas which constitute our pysches, in "Mental fight." From his earliest tractates such as There is No Natural Religion and All Religions are One, Through his major prophecies The Four Zoas and Jerusalem, and elsewhere in his work, Blake also refers to Urthona's power as "The Poetic Genius," and the "Imagination," a power epitomized by Jesus.

As this chapter will illustrate, Blake, Hamann, and Boehme all contended that this dialectical interaction must first apprehend that human history does not begin with the Fall of Adam and Eve, but with a "pre-historical" existence in which humanity enjoyed a complete union with its own divinity. This notion parallels to some extent Marx's notion of a "pre-history" before the emergence of truly societal structures; the main difference between his concept, articulated most forcefully and famously in The Communist Manifesto, and these writers' lies in Marx's view that this "pre-historical" state was basically savage and asocial, something inferior even to the debased

civilizations which followed it and therefore something never to which we should never return. Blake, Hamann, and Boehme all posit "pre-histories" which were infinitely preferable to miasmic epochal realities. Yet, in contrast to those critics who assess this tendency as reactionary and typically Romantic, these writers take a typically divergent view from most Romanticisms, perhaps most notably from that of Novalis, the arch-Romantic of German literature. In contrast to Novalis' bemoaning of a pristine prior reality in works such as Heinrich von Ofterdingen, and his intense desire to backtrack to such a reality, these artists realize that we must go forward through the trials of experiential existence, sustained by the vision of a past unity, in order to achieve a recombinant social reality. That reality may reflect but never mirror "pre-history," articulated by Boehme as a divine and continuous "Blick" between God and humanity, by Hamann as an "Urkorrespondenz," and by Blake as the initially unified pysche--"The Four Zoas"--of Albion, who is the holistic emodiment of which we are the atomistic constituents. The importance of such a pre-historical state for these visionaries is exemplified by its presence in virtually all of their major works. Moreover, this achievable reflection of our lost unity will surpass its antecedent, vivified and diversified by the knowledge gained by sensual, emotional, and pyschological

experience. Thus their visions of history are hardly reactionary; conversely they assert radically progressive conceptions of history, in which humanity must soberly assess the past in order to transform the present and future into an economically, politically, and organically independent society.

No one may read far in the works of these writers without discerning that the past, present, and future are for them contained within a typological matrix. The events of the past adumbrate the conditions of the present and the possibilities of the future, and these experiential tenses all refer to the historical pageant of the Bible, especially the eschatological visions asserted in the Gospels and the Book of Revelation, and hence contain apocalyptic force. Each writer underscores this typological tendency in his emphasis upon a Christocentric reality, upon Jesus as the quintessence of everything human. This tendency is extended and deepened by the vast network of biblical allusions which permeates each writer's canon; perhaps the figure of supreme importance for each, besides Christ, is Ezekiel's vision of wheels within a great wheel, which each writer seized as a symbol of a viably recombinant society. In such a society diversity and dynamism are not sacrificed in the name of equality, in which not a homogenous conflation, but a heterogenous conjoinment is achieved. Yet such

typological views of the patterns of history are not equatable, as several indictments of these writers contend, with merely analogous or allegorical perspectives, which tend to look past the historical phenomenon itself to its conceptual, abstract significance. In contrast, Blake, Hamann, and Boehme all stress the "Ding an sich," the event as event, the "minute particular" which may not be abstracted from its concrete reality, but also through which we may a vision of the infinite energy which charges it and, simultaneously, us. The "thing in itself" is stripped of the mysterious aura which surrounds it in Kantian thought, since it is not unknowable directly, but immediately accessible to those who perceive it correctly.

Various critics--most notably Stoudt, Punter, Damrosch, and Aers--have attacked the historical perspectives held by these three writers as essentially naive in other regards, especially in what they perceive as the tendency to assert an apocalypse achievably simply by realizing that we are, after all, really god-like. Then the societal corruptions accreted over centuries will immediately fall away and existence will be truly and finally egalitarian. I will argue that such indictments seriously distort the historicisms asserted by these artists. They believed, just as Marx did, that the transmogrification of debased social structures would

demand a long process of historical revision and "re-visioning," and would be preceded with an intensive, extensive remolding of material reality by a populace whose consciousness must be first expanded. This belief in an apocalypse achievable only over the course of an indefinite period is evidenced by Boehme's refusal of Chiliastic tendencies to set a precise date for the Last Judgement (Stoudt, 152), and his affirmation of the necessity that we must, instead of passively awaiting an arbitrary date, "Aufwachen" to the fruitful possiblity of a truly egalitarian society and strive now to attain it. Similarly, Hamann, in his crucial conceptions of the "Geist der Beobachtung" and the "Geist der Weissagung," argues for the necessity of a period of extensive, dialectical reassessment of our historical heritage and present reality before we may mold a satisfactory future. Blake concurs with Hamann and Boehme in his assertion that "Acts alone are History" (E 468), and that history cannot be deeply altered immediately. His recognition of a progressive yet gradual historical evolution is manifested most clearly in the apocalyptically charged "Night the Ninth" of The Four Zoas, where, after eight "nights" of agonized fragmentation and alienation, the corrupt material world is harrowed by Rintrah's plow of apocalyptic righteousness, and is forced through the visionary wine-press. Blake, Hamann, and Boehme

consistently assert that such a visionary harvest is only achievable by the inevitable, but gradual, turning outwards of humanity that is the second step of the imaginative redefinition of history.

This imaginative redefinition of history at a holistic level leads each author to conceive a final egalitarian totality erectable not upon the plains of some removed, ethereal realm, but upon those of material existence. Thus, Boehme, Hamann, and Blake are irrefutably removed from the more idealistic Romantics with whom they are commonly lumped by many critics. They do not seek to escape what Joyce was to term "the nightmare of history," but to transform it into a vision of joy. They do not desire to flee the hustle and bustle and brouhaha of quotidian existence, but to work within it, to extract from it all its energy and diversity, all its joy and love, and channel these into an envisioned totality devoid of its lethargy and sameness, its despair and hate. From the Morgenroethe to his very last works, Boehme asserts his desire to achieve a dynamic eternality in this world through his constant emphasis of the final replacement of dialectical "Ringen" with dialectical "Spiel," an activity carried on within the "Freudenreich," a realm of joy firmly grounded in material reality. Hamann and Blake both underscore their committment to an egalitarian reality achievable in the corporeal world

through their positing of Jerusalem as the future heaven promised by scripture. Importantly, they both chose as a final totality not a vision of placid pastoralism, but of dynamic urbanism, a cosmopolitan reality in which every human has a dwelling. This city, unlike the placid, perfect, and static urban Utopia generally prophesied by western religion, will not abdicate the acquired technology and scientific knowledge of experiential existence, but incorporate both within a civilization of divine humanity, one which will be constantly altered and refined by its inhabitants.

But these visions of totally egalitarian societies achievable within material reality can never be realized without perceiving the historical process through a dialectically imaginative mode. Punter, referring to Blake and Hegel, has made a point applicable to both Boehme and Hamann:

> The dialectical movement of spirit is not cosmic history, nor the history of society, nor individual pyschic history: it is a medium defined by the inseparability of these three histories and designed specifically to manifest their unity. (160)

Boehme was particularly attuned to the connections between these three histories, and his work reveals an intense and constant concern with elucidating the dialectical interaction and interpenetration between them. Such elucidation occurs on a personal level,

according to Boehme, through a progressive struggle between "gute" and "boese" wills. As I have already argued, Boehme radically redefines those religious commonplaces, yet Punter argues the opposite, and would exclude Boehme from the historical vision he delineates above. He contends that Boehme believes in

> an instrumental necessity for evil, the necessity that evil be present for the final validation of the good. He is not, like Blake, conveying a new insight into the historical meaning and relativity of seemingly objective ethical terms, but is producing a rather complex reconstruction of a morally conventional theodicy....Boehme is not referring to a specific, historical manifestation of fragmentation, but to a purely abstract and cyclical objectification. Once again, the concept of progress, of purpose, which is understandably so elusive to dialectical thinking, has escaped, and been replaced by an endless oscillation.... There is no notion of the reevaluation of the <u>content</u> of moral judgements. (42-43)

These assertions concerning Boehme's definitions of good and evil are highly misleading. Boehme revealed the historically specific, ideological distortion inherent in the standard objectification of such moral terminology, asserting that the only "evil" which threatens humanity is the failure to annihilate the "Selbheit" which obscures our inner interconnectedness. Such self-absorption effects not only a turning inward away from social responsibility, but also from historical awareness, accepting the chinks of selfish perception in the stead of visionary expansiveness. Thus "evil" has nothing to do

with the ideological distortions of some branches of organized Christianity, which assert that any failure to observe its decalogue or other moral prescriptions is negative and necessitates the intercession--at a price--of the priesthood. For Boehme, the inner core of the indivdual is charged with the ultimate good, the creative imagination capable of erasing social barriers, and thus capable of transforming history. It would seem that for organized Christianity, the inner core of the individual must bear the indissoluble stain of the Original Sin and innate depravity; otherwise doctrinal religion's continued existence might be endangered.

Boehme clearly evinces thereby a radical redefinition of the "content of moral judgements" rendered by a "conventional theodicy." This redefinition in turn extends his dialectical thought concerning cosmic, social, and individual pyschic history far beyond "endless oscillation." Indeed, we have already seen this: Boehme maintains that "Ringen" must lead ultimately to the more enlightened form of intellectual and physical dialectics he terms "Spiel." When this is achieved, what Punter describes as Boehme's "instrumental necessity for evil" passes away (Punter, 42). Evil--self-engrossment--is replaced by a dynamic eternality in which individuals are totally conscious of their inherent bonds to one another. Boehme saw selfishness and possessiveness as the logical

results of the debased feudalistic society he inhabited, and knew it to be a historical perpetuated distortion and not an innate one. Yet it was a reality and must be overcome. He asserted his highly unconventional view of evil in defining sin in Von sechs mystischen Punkten:

> Also ist erkenntlich, was Suende sei; oder wie es Suende: als naemlich der menschliche Wille...erwecket in sein eigenes Feuer, und brennt in sein eigener Qual.... (316.3-16)[3]

This passage holds significant ramifications: sin is not equated with moral petty larceny but with a separation of the self from its rightful "Blick" with the divinity in us all, and with a submission to, and strengthening of, that separatist "Selbheit." Thus Boehme, in his basic assertion that all "Ringen" must seek to destroy this false selfhood, breaks through the false historical ideology which perpetuates the notion of innate depravity. Such a notion not only propagates the reign of religious institutions, and the political reigns they directly support, it also asserts the futility of all prophetic, radical initiative to change the process of history. If we are inherently corrupt, then our notions of progress may seem delusive and pointless, and we certainly less motivation to transform the world around

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[3]"Thus is it apprehendable, what sin be, or rather how sin originates: when the human will... awakes in its own fire, and burns in its own agony...."

us. Better to accept passively the moral pablum proffered us by the priests who so kindly intercede between us sinners and our angry God. Boehme's epoch was not "afflicted with the doctrine of human perfectability," as Flannery O'Connor's Catholicism led her to describe our own in her essay "The Teaching of Literature" (Writing for the College Curriculum, 107). Yet he here sows the seeds of what adherents of doctrinal Christianity understandably perceive as an afflictive view of humanity, since it threatens the very foundations of the churches they cling to. This view Marx built upon, revealing in the process the soporific effect of organized religion.

Boehme saw the evil of the "Selbheit" as the solipsistic, individual parallel of the universal threat posed by the immaterial "Ungrund" to the material world. This void is horrifying precisely because of its utter lack of human determination, a clear precedent of subsequent Hegelian and Marxian thought. Humanity's role is to push daily the light of imaginatively illumined struggle farther against the blackness of the "Ungrund." Thus Boehme clearly abjures the quivering Romanticism (and Modernism) which shudders in the face of the void, and recognizes the imperfections of the present world, but this recognition does not demand "eine Melancholei, sondern ein ritterliche Ringen" (Menschenwerdung Jesu

Christi II.7:11). [4] Stoudt has limned the nature of such a knightly struggle:

> When Boehme discovered his Ungrund as a dark deep of indeterminate being he also came to understand that such a deep stood in dialectical contrast to the rich fullness on which all created things are mirrored.... Instead of having the One and nonbeing as the poles of his emanation, like Plotinus, Boehme's God had the Ungrund and Sophia, or Wisdom, cooperating to generate the world of things. The Ungrund makes a counter-stroke so that the related dialectical processes of self-knowledge and self-projection may take place. (212)

History is a process wherein the human imagination, which effects the "self-knowledge" that makes us conscious of our inherently social natures, progresses dialectically against the constant countering of the Ungrund. Each step forward only reveals the darkness into which we must carry the light of civilization tomorrow, until we reach the "Freudenreich." "Sophia" is comparable to Boehme's notion of "Verstaendnis," the comprehension which encompasses imaginative, rational, and emotional knowledge. Importantly, such a notion contrasts starkly the mystic Plotinus' view of a static union between the "One" and nonbeing (Stoudt, 109).

Hamann also evinces an essentially dialectical view of history, one in which the the "Geist der Weissagung" and the "Geist der Beobachtung" oppositionally interpret and elucidate the past, present, and future of humanity. The

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[4] "melancholy, but rather knightly wrestling."

former interpretative mode is essentially synthetic, as Hamann's equal reference to it as the "poetisches Genie" and his assertion in Ein fliegender Brief an Niemand indicate: "Jede Handlung ist ausser ihrer urspruenglichen und natuerlichen materiellen und mechanischen Bezeichnung noch mancherlei formeller, figuerlicher, tropischer und typischer Bedeutung faehig" (N III, 367).[5] The spirit of observation, the philsophical genius, discerns the material and mechanical sign of each historical action--a view of time strikingly in accord with Blake's contention that "Acts alone are history" --and in turn the poetic genius extracts that sign's typological and figurative signification, disdaining "objective" opinions concerning history, and forging instead a vision openly based in an interpenetration between objective and subjective modes of perception. The egalitarian nature of this process is asserted not only by the epigraph from Hamann that began this chapter, but also by his assertion of Christ, the ultimate egalitarian, as the apotheosis of the spirit of prophecy: "Das Zeugnis JESU also ist der Geist der Weissagung."[6]

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[5]Every action contains potentially in its original, natural, material, and mechanical sign diverse formal, figurative, tropical, and typological signification.

[6]"The witness of Christ is therefore the spirit of prophecy."

Yet again critics have consistently perceived Hamann's historical viewpoint as merely reconcilatory, as purely synthetic, ignoring his emphasis upon the necessity of practical historical development. Punter attempts to squeeze Boehme's thought within his generalizing scheme concerning the dialectical tradition have also unfortunately distorted the essential tenets of Hamann. Punter argues that Blake and Hegel's emphasizing of the necessary "redemption and transformation of reason through history...move[s] beyond the polar structures in which a Hamann or a Coleridge seeks to comprehend the processes of abstraction and concretization" (198-199). Punter deepens his distinction between the "truly dialectical" thought of Blake and Hegel by stating that

> Hamann in a sense shows the danger of a purely subectivist approach to the problem, in that he sets up the opposition [between subjectivity and objectivity] as absolute, and does not look for its transcendence in history; in rejecting reason totally, he abandons hope of synthesis and resigns himself to an intuitive mysticism. (180)

In his emphasis upon the apparent necessity of a homogenizing synthesis and historical transcendence, Punter here himself echoes Coleridge far more similarly than do either Hamann or Blake. We have already seen that Hamann is in no sense of the word a mystic: he argued that the entire warehouse of human perception was grounded in the five "Gerstenbrodte" of the senses, and maintained

that the true artist must speak through "Geschoepfe--durch Begebenheiten--oder durch Blut und Feuer und Rauchdampf" (N II, 204).[7] His historical vision is grounded in the material world, and he does not see the opposition between subjectivity and objectivity, reason and imagination, the "philosophisches Genie" and the "poetisches Genie" as absolute but rather as a historically determined condition, a temporary fragmentation resolvable only through dialectical historical progression. Like Blake and Hegel, he stresses the necessity of the "redemption and transformation of reason," the "Geist der Beobachtung" through practical development. This redemptive transformation is not achieved by devaluing our rational powers to the extent of a Novalis or a Hoelderlin, nor, as in the case of a Gottsched or a Lessing, by giving those powers complete autonomy. Rather we must bring our reason into dialectical play with our prophetic spirit, our poetic genius, not only to redeem logical perception but the pageant of history itself. Such a richly dialectical view of time also allows us to transform individual historical phenomena from continuing links in a chain of ideological delusion into threads within a tapestry of visionary enlightenment.

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[7] "through creatures--through events--or through blood and fire and dense steam."

Lowrie has pointed out that within this dialectical matrix "history as a whole--and not only sacred history--is God's speech to men who have ears to hear it" (9). Joergensen has concurred and deepened this perspective, asserting that for Hamann "In der Natur, in der Geschichte, in der Heiligen Schrift spricht er [Gott] zu den Menschen..." (30).[8] That this dialogue is enunciated not only through history and scripture, but also through the phenomena of the natural world, confirms Hamann's committment to material reality and further refutes Punter's definition of him as an intuitive mystic. Hamann described this tripartite dialogue as "eine Anrede an die Kreatur durch die Kreatur," as an address to the world of creation through the world of creation, or in other words a dialogue with the world through the events and phenomena of lived experience. Particular occurrences in the present constitute only monosyllables in this dialogue which the "Geist der Beobachtung" discerns; the "Geist der Weissagung" must place them into the pattern of a meaningful conversation, as a central passage from "Kleeblatt: hellinistische Briefe," or "Trefoil: Hellenistic Letters," contends:

> Kann man aber das Vergangene kennen, wenn man das Gegenwaertige nicht einmal versteht?----Und wer will vom Gegenwaertigen richtige Begriffe

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[8]"In nature, in history, in holy scripture, God speaks to humanity."

> nehmen, ohne das Zukunftige zu wissen? Das Zukuenftige bestimmt das Gegenwaertige, und dieses das Vergangene.... Um das Gegenwaertige zu verstehen, ist uns die Poesie behuelflich auf eine synthetische, und die Philosophie auf eine analytische Weise. (Werke, ed. Petri, II, 87)[9]

Here is a concise definition of Hamann's historical dialectic. He distances himself irrefutably from Punter's contentions concerning subjective mysticism, asserting the crucial necessity of not only poesy, by which he means not "Poesie als Dichtung in engerem Sinn...Poesie ist Prophetie" (Wild, 176), but also philosophy, of not only synthetic but analytic thought. This dialectical positioning of the two modes of historical cognition mediates between a tripartite view of time, one which demands simultaneous awareness of the past, present, and future. From this dialectical process we may effect "die Staatsklugheit der Versification" (N II 204), the political awareness of verse, in opposition to the socially vacuous poetry of the Enlightment, which Hamann termed "Turbat-Verse," from the latin "turba" --confused, muddy, miasmic doggerel. As he contends in Ein fliegender Brief, we must recognize that "Jeder Augenblick ist vollkommen rund," that each moment is perfectly round in

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[9]Can one understand the past if one does not even comprehend the present? And who claims to take correct concepts from the present without knowing the future? The future determines the present, and the present the past.... In order to understand the present Poesie is helpful to us in a synthetic, and philosophy in an analytic, manner.

its emergence from the past and entrance into the future. Without this totalizing recognition, "der gegenwaertige Augenblick ist nur ein todter Rumpf, dem der Kopf und die Fuesse fehlen; er bleibt immer auf der Stelle, worauf er liegt" (N III, 287); the present moment, without the head of the future or the feet of the past, is but a lifeless torso.

The parallels here with the thought of Blake and Marx are quite profound. Hamann even uses diction quite similar to that which Blake was to adopt, the historical roundness of each moment corresponding closely with Blake's image in Milton of each arterial pulsation as a "globule" containing an entrance into eternity. And although Hamann is clearly concerned with a future of Christian apocalyptic, his historical vision is to an extent quite similar to Marx's, who also asserted the necessity of a comprehensive awareness of the past, its conditioning of the present, and their subsequent determination of the future. Reiner Wild's comment upon Hamann's historical matrix underscores these similarities with Marxian notions:

> Von Dialektik laesst sich in dem Sinne sprechen, dass Hamann jedes Einzelne als Moment eines einheitlichen Geschichtsprozess begreift, dass nur im Ganzen dieses Prozesses verstehbar ist, dessen

> Totalitaet gegenwaertig und darin erkennbar wird. (187)[10]

Thus Hamann's influence upon Marx through Hegel is unmistakable; stressing the necessity of an expanded view of history as a totality, Hamann rejects the religious doctrine of time as something which happens to us, in which the more things apparently change the more they stay the same, and he replaces this quietism with a radically prophetic stance. This stance, intitiated by the Hebrew prophets and fulfilled by Christ, who is the historical incarnation of the Godhead, is available to--indeed must be assumed by--everyone.

The historical dialectics of both Hamann and Boehme explicitly demand a rejection of mere memory, the passive contemplation of the patterns of time they felt classical and neoclassical thought relied upon. Blake also forcefully rejected reliance upon memory, positing his own dialectical theory of history, one which goes far beyond frequently mentioned phrases such as "Without Contraries is no Progression." Boehme refused to allow his horrific vision of the Ungrund and the imperfections of the material world to drive him into despair and proffered his own dynamic vision of history, just as Hamann remained

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[10]One can speak of dialectic in the sense that Hamann conceives of every individual as a factor in a unified historical process, which is only understandable in the whole of this process, and whose totality therein becomes contemporary and recognizable.

steadfast in his identity as a "Prediger in der Wueste," a preacher raging in the wasteland of "enlightened" rationalism and historical myopia; similarly, Blake, unlike several of the British Romantics who were his contemporaries, cast out despair in the face of perpetuated slavery in the America he once lauded as a land of visionary revolution, and in view of the Terror which followed the revolution that supposedly apotheosized reason. The memory of such horrors must be opposed by "Recollection," a term whose etymology signifies, as Ferber writes, "a gathering in of the dispersed fragments of, an active re-membering of the dismembered whole" (156). This recollection can only be effected by the dialectical interaction of "The Four Zoas," the pyschic constituents of both individual and aggregate humanity.

Specifically, the prophetic spirit or "Poetic Genius" which Blake names Urthona, and the rational mode of perception he names Urizen, are primarily involved in the interpretation of history, working within the unifying matrix symbolized by Ezekiel's wheel. This interaction mirrors closely the dialectical relationship Boehme places between "irdische Vernunft" and "Imagination," both contained within the matrix of the totalizing "Verstaendnis," and parallels Hamann's notion of the interpenetration of the "poetisches Genie" and "philosophisches Genie." For Blake, as for Hamann, the

rational faculty analyzes, the "Poetic Genius" synthesizes the diverse phenomena of material history.

Such activity by its very nature is anti-ideological, breaking through the accreted distortions of spuriously "objective" histories. History is for Blake also an "Anrede," an aural and visual poem whose meter and content must be completely clarified through an active struggle with its disparate elements. But as Bloom indicates, "the proper use of this [poetic] pattern, for Blake, depended upon an achieved freedom from the interpretative tradition of priestcraft" (95). Like Boehme and Hamann, he asserts that apocalyptic history and its elucidation are the provinces of humanity as a whole, not merely a few clerics, whose real employment is to perpetuate the delusive mysteries of innate depravity and essential isolation which prop up not only their own structures, but also those of the ruling powers. Erdman, referring to The Four Zoas, illuminates the deadly effects of such delusive ideologies of historicism:

> The tragic burden of the industrial vision of Nights VI and VIIa is the tyrannous separation of labor from love, specter from man, production from perfection--in short, the division of labor and the division of the laborer. (305)

I would add that it is the burden of the imaginative powers to apprehend this fragmentation as historically specific, as a product of those ideologies created to

propagate the interests of those whose powers are derived by presenting such delusions as a natural and given reality.

The great extent to which such ideological notions have permeated society, and their effectiveness in continually delimiting the vision of the populace, Blake exemplifies in a chilling passage from Night VII of The Four Zoas:

> Then left the Sons of Urizen the plow & harrow the loom....
> They forgd the sword the chariot of war the battle ax....
> And all the arts of life they changd into the arts of death....
> And in their stead intricate wheels invented Wheel without wheel
> To perplex youth in their outgoings & to bind to labours
> Of day & night the myriads of Eternity. that they might file
> And polish brass & iron hour after hour laborious workmanship
> Kept ignorant of the use that they might spend the days of wisdom
> In sorrowful drudgery to obtain a scanty pittance of bread
> In ignorance to view a small portion & think that All. (FZ: VII, 20-32)

This passage is Blake's most vitriolic attack upon the direct connection between the arts of false ideology and the machinations of destruction. Significantly, the Sons of Urizen, the minions of rationalism who create its ideological tracts and weapons of oppression, manufacture the opposite of Blake's version of Ezekiel's vision, wheels without wheels, cogs grinding against each other, a

totalizing mechanism which does not illuminate and unite the populace, but rather "perplexes" and "binds" them to isolated stations in the workforce. At the risk of belaboring a perhaps obvious point, I would stress that these workers have no part in the actual creation and molding of "brass & iron," whose use as weapons has already been determined by the powers that be, but are only allowed the menial tasks of polishing and filing the instruments of their own enslavement and destruction. Erdman has said this passage reveals that "industrial tyranny can only be maintained by keeping the people ignorant of their heritage" (312).

I would point out as well the nightmarish historical ramifications of this passage: Blake emphasizes the cyclical, generational devastation of limiting ideologies by referring to the "youth," whose "outgoings" are halted and turned back into the dark mills of industry. The expansive scope of the "myriads of Eternity" is reduced to the endless circle of "labours of day & night"; from such a vantage point, eternity cannot be perceived in the "hour after hour" of "laborious workmanship." History as human social progress becomes invalid and superfluous, merely the repetition of the same dull round--"the days of wisdom," a striking echo of Boehme's "Sophia," are not seized, but reduced to a cycle of ignorance. And the

ideology of industrial capitalism asserts this cycle as "true" history.

Just how destructive and loathsome such ideology is to Blake we can judge from his own historical dialectics, delineated forcefully not only in Jerusalem but in Milton as well. Blake's poetic champion unfortunately allowed even his great vision to be limited by adherence to a traditionally doctrinal notion of history, complete with a heaven in which nothing happens. In striking contrast to merely circular, quietist visions of history, Blake asserts that within every second there lie myriad eternities. Nancy Goslee has shown that Blake disagrees with Milton's historicism, contending instead that we

> must transform time as a rigid sequence of the past --a definition Milton would claim was caused by the irreversible he describes in Paradise Lost--into prophetic moments. In these 'pulsations of an artery' epiphanies or theophanies can occur. (37)

This process, which Goslee describes as the transformation of "biological process into visionary moments capable of including all time" (40), assimilates time as a radically transformed fuel that empowers imaginative vision and in turn penetrates obscuring historical ideologies. For Blake, as for Hamann, each moment is "vollkommen rund," perfectly round in its inseparability from the past and future: we determine our future as social entities by seizing the present and transforming it, by wresting from

it its infinite potential. We must not allow ourselves to be deluded by those systems of false consciousness which seek to limit our awareness to the present, to restrict us to a self-absorbed, hand-to-mouth existence immersed in the quotidian. If we do allow this, then we simply turn the treadmill of the same dull round proffered us as "true" time by capitalist ideologies, accepting the "todter Rumpf," the lifeless torso of the present; its connection to the future decapitated, its emergence from the past dismembered.

The essentially dialectical views of the historical process which Boehme, Hamann, and Blake developed disallow any indictments of their work as historically unconcerned, mystical, or escapist. A mystical historical perspective would assert that the passage of time is something only a few select, specially gifted seers can interpret. The masses must sit idly by and have their destinies described for them, in contrast to these three visionaries' claims that we make our own destinies by acting as our own prophets. God speaks through history <u>to us all</u>. Each artist posited a similar but singular juxtaposition between two interpretative modes whose processes of clarification develop through a visionary warring with the unfolding of time. Each artist also asserted a notion of a "pre-history" which must be recognized by the individual before any comprehensive vision of the historical process

and humanity's relationship to it could be attained. We have already seen a significant parallel with this notion and Marx's own version of "pre-history," that period which precedes the beginning of social history. Here however, most similarities between these writers' theories on this topic end. Marx viewed the "pre-historical" state as a period of savagery and disunity, totally classless, an epoch marked by a complete lack of social integration. For him, then, the beginnings of social history--the formation of humanity into groups with common economic and cultural interests-- represents not a fall, but an advance, a first step into the dialectical whirl of time which will lead inexorably to a totally civilized, unified, classless society. It is this conception of impending and inevitable liberty which gives The Communist Manifesto much of its considerable power. Thus our past is not something to bemoan but rather something which must be overcome through a constant redefinition of the social structures which envelope us.

For Boehme, Hamann, and Blake, however, the beginnings of history signal the end of the pre-historical state in which humanity enjoyed a total unity with its own divinity. Thus social history is for them ironically a catalog of the asocial aspects of the human race, a "fall" into disunity. Importantly, however, their notions do not merely repeat doctrinal Christianity's account of a fall

caused by Eve's desire for knowledge, and Adam's "selfish" empathy for her plight. Rather, the "fall" which each of these artists describes is attributable to the development of the asocial "Selfhood," the false notion of the world as viewed through the narrow chinks of self- absorption. The crux of the dialectical "Ringen" of lived experience is the historical process of grinding away the accretions of the "Selbheit" in order to reveal again our essential commonality. Yet this basic tenet is in no way regressive, in the manner of a Novalis, as some critics have contended. Lived experience is not something to be escaped, but rather something which must be transformed--the achievement of the "Freudenreich," of the new "Jerusalem," will not merely repeat that lost unity. Rather, it will be superior to that prelapsarian integration, a recombinant entity infused with the dissilient diversity of material existence.

Boehme's belief in a pre-historical state is manifested in his conception of an "Ur-Blick," the continous gaze we once enjoyed with the Godhead but broke off, which Stoudt describes as Boehme's positing of

> a fall before history and one in history. Tired of unity, Adam slept and his imagination turned away from God; the constant 'Blick' was broken. He 'brought his will and desire from God into Selfhood...' (266)

God for Boehme can be equated with unified humanity, the

macrocosmic entity abjured by Adam in pursuit of his own microcosmic identity. Importantly, the initial fall does not result from Adam's failure to heed the condescending dicta of some paternalistic deity; Boehme's "Blick" asserts an eye-to-eye equality between humanity and God, a state in which both are distinguishable without being disjunct. Sin originates for Boehme not from Adam and Eve's dissatisfaction with the pretty pastoral setting provided them by a self-important God of Wrath, but rather from their rejection of their own status as God. The fall of Genesis is secondary. However, the creation of "Selbheit" also mandates its destruction and thus history is inveterately dialectical for Boehme. It is not by sitting idly by, a passivity sanctioned by the religious ideology of innate depravity and the political ideology of a "natural," inescapable class system, that the Resurrection may be effected, but only by destroying the asocial accretions of self-engrossment that we may go forward and reattain the direct gaze with our divine nature as inherently social beings.

Hamann's conception of an "Urkorrespondenz" between humanity and God parallels closely Boehme's "Ur-Blick." For Hamann, everything--history, nature, scripture, sexuality, speech, politics--refers to this lost correspondence with God that preceded social history: the word "social" implies the possibility (which is now

reality) of an anti-social world, placing the basic oppositions--between the unity of the "Urkorrespondenz" and the fragmentation of humanity now--of Hamann's dialectical historicity. Far from resigning himself to the mystical contemplation of such polarities, as Punter asserts, Hamann rages constantly against such false dualisms and indeed indicts them as the results of manufactured historical delusions. In the correspondence once shared by humanity and divinity there existed a heterogenous unity devoid of distance. The unjust ruling classes that developed over the course of fallen history seized history as their own province and masked its radical references to the "Urkorrespondenz." This obfuscation reached its ultimate embodiment in the philosophy of the Enlightenment and those who influenced its major thinkers. Wild points out that

> In seiner Kritik des Subjekt-Objekt-Dualismus, der Grundlage der neuzeitlichen Philosophie spaetestens seit Descartes, entdeckt Hamann so Geschichtlichkeit als wesentliche Voraussetzung menschlicher Existenz und Erkenntnis und versucht, die Stellung des Menschen als In-der-Welt sein zu begreifen, nicht als Entgegensetzung zur Welt. (Hamann, 10)[11]

Truly "fallen" history for Hamann, that created and

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[11]In his critique of subject-object dualism, the basis of modern philosophy since Descartes, Hamann discovers historicity as an essential precondition of human existence and cognition and he attempts to grasp the position of humanity as a being in, not an opposition to, the world.

perpetuated by the ideologists of the church-state axis, asserts an essential and initial distance between God and humanity, even in its version of a prelapsarian paradise. Hamann's notion of a pre-historical Urkorrespondenz rejects that innate dualism as inherently false and destructively illusive. Those same ideologists seize and extend this false subject-object distance as a universal, historically transcendent "truth." Our perception of ourselves as isolated subjects is the only sin Hamann allowed (Baudler, 169), and, ironically, he felt its major proponents were the "enlightened" adherents of his epochal status quo. This ideological dualism extends perniciously into every aspect of existence, turning delusions into "reality," perpetuating the "natural" chasm between individuals, and thus between classes, and in turn between nations. All material is property, from trees to wives, and the bottom line is Carlyle's "Cash Nexus." If we perceive ourselves as essentially disconnected from the world, and its other inhabitants, then unified action, which would create social revolution, is prevented. Hamann's notion of a pre-historical Urkorrespondez is a radical denial of the basic postulate of most false ideology, asserting that humanity's beginnings stem from and point to a truly egalitarian existence. Thus his incessant outrage throughout his work at Kantean philosophy, its predecessors, and its permutations becomes

quite understandable. For him, these are all delusive detours from the course of "true" history, evidence of humanity's insistent turning away from "the speech to the world of creation through the world of creation" that is audible everywhere to those who desire to attune themselves to it.

Hamann and Boehme's radical attacks upon the notion of humanity's origins as "naturally" dualistic bear striking resemblances to Blake's basic historical thought. Perhaps these resemblances are seen most clearly in a crucial passage which begins "Night the Second" of The Four Zoas: "Rising upon his Couch of Death Albion beheld his Sons/ Turning his Eyes outward to Self. losing the Divine Vision" (23:1-2). Most crucial is the paradoxical diction of turning "outward to Self," that is to the false encrusted shell--the Selfhood-- which divides the individual from social unity, as opposed to the true inner "Self" which asserts constantly the individual's innately social nature. Moreover we could substitute for "losing the Divine Vision" losing the divine "Blick" or "Urkorrespondenz."

Blake's notion of pre-history is as radical a departure from the distortions of historical ideologies as the conceptions of Hamann or Boehme. For Blake, the human race not only enjoyed an egalitarian vision or correspondene with divinity, but was indeed divinity

itself: Albion, the divine human whose aggregate being we as individuals once constituted. Albion's loss of the Divine Vision through his fragmentary turning to the separatist Selfhood is a pyschic dramatization of Blake's early attack in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell upon the dualism postulated by church-state ideologies:

> All Bibles or sacred codes. have been the source of the following Errors.
> 1. That Man has two real existing principles Viz: a Body & a Soul.
> 2. That Energy. calld Evil. is alone from the Body. & that Reason calld Good is alone from the Soul.
> 3. That God will torment Man in Eternity for following his Energies. (4)

We might take Blake's initial assertion here to its logical conclusion: that not only have all Bibles and sacred codes created false dualisms, they are tied to their perpetuation. False historical ideologies assert that evil stems from the body, that the fall of humanity--and of Satan--resulted from heeding the rebellious impulses of our irrational, ungodly faculties. Moreover, these ideologies maintain "that Energy. calld Evil is alone from the Body," or, in other words, that revolutionary impulses are equatable with materialism, because such energy questions the postulates they seek to perpetuate as truths. Following these materialistic "Energies" will lead us to eternal hell. We should instead heed the dictates of our immaterial souls, which,

for some reason, always council us to obedience, to a humility which amounts to self-abnegation.

In contrast, Blake asserts that "Man has no Body distinct from his Soul for that calld Body is a portion of the Soul discernd by the five Senses. the chief inlets of Soul in this Age" (5). Not only does this assertion exemplify perfectly Blake's dialectical revising of past historical "Errors," it also attacks the very core of all false historical ideologies: not only do humans have no corporeal existence distinct from a spiritual one, they have no individual existence separate from a social one. Blake is here not trying to imply that there is no difference between intellectual and physical existence, between individual and social existence, but rather is refuting vehemently the notion that these are naturally disconnected, isolated, alienated, disjunct. There can be differentation without alienation. The imaginative vision revels in the diversity and unity of human existence; false ideology can only exist by asserting that diversity and unity as "Evil"--and by having people believe it. Separation between the soul and body, between individuals, classes, or nations is an historically specific, ideologically wrought evil. "Energy is the only life," Blake contends (MHH, 5). The lives we currently lead, which demand the voluntary etiolation of our creative

energies, by definition disallow the creation of a fully humanized social reality.

Ferber offers a helpful analysis of this historically deconstructive process in Blake's work, one which also illumines our discussion of Hamann and Boehme in this regard:

> The main point of the Bible of Hell is meant to precede and supplant the Bible of Genesis, to show its belatedness or secondariness: Genesis is merely a derivative of some ancient source that flows more directly into Blake. (47)

Blake's hellish Bible is his complete canon, which he viewed in every way as the antithesis of those prescripta for asocial lethargy proffered by the dogmatists of quietism. Just so do Hamann's "kabbalistische Prosa" and Boehme's writings, which point ever toward an auroral awakening of apocalyptic historical consciousness, oppose these manifestos of false consciousness.

Such intentions adumbrate the explicitly typological views of history which these authors held. For them, the past, present, and future are totally christocentric. Jesus fulfilled and transcended the legalistic righteousness of the Pentateuch, replacing sanctified condemnation with loving empathy and forgiveness. He achieved on an individual level what humanity must attain in history on a social level. Thus history in all its manifestations centers on Jesus--the pre-Christian epochs

which presaged his coming, his material existence, the epochs following his death which refuse to act upon the vision of ultimate social potential that he proferred.

Yet their typological visions of history never degenerate into mere allegory, as Wild's discussion of Hamann's typology, one which is quite applicable to the typologies of Blake and Boehme, makes clear:

> Die typologische Deutung stellt so einen Zusammenhang zwischen zwei historischen Ereignisse her, die beide in ihrer Geschichtlichkeit bestehen bleiben; darin liegt der spezifische Unterschied zur Allegorese, die die Historizitaet des Auszulegenden leugnet oder zumindest nicht beachtet....Hamann sieht also nicht nur den Prozess der Heilsgeschichte in der Struktur von Praefiguration und Erfuellung geordnet, auch der Einzelne und dessen Erloesung, um die es je geht, ist in diese Ordnung einbeschlossen. (142)[12]

Allegory hastens past the specificity and singular identity of particular historical events in order to coalesce them within some essentially homogenizing historicism. All too often such allegorical interpretations are confused with fully typological historicities, or at least the forms in which Blake,

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[12]Typological meaning posits hence a connection between two historical events, both of which continue to exist in their historicity; herein lies the specific contrast between typology and allegory, which falsifies, or at the least fails to observe, the historicity of the event to be interpreted..... Thus Hamann views not only the process of the history of salvation as ordered in the structure of prefiguration and fulfillment, but also the individual and his redemption, which is always the concern, is contained within this order.

Hamann, and Boehme envisioned them. Their visionary typologies insist upon the historicity of each "minute particular," refusing to abnegate the specificity of singular historical events in order to squeeze them into their Christocentric views of history.

Following the example of Christ, who refused the title of "King of the Jews" and instead proclaimed himself the "Son of Man," embracing not only racially "pure" Semites but also the Gentiles, these artists also integrated "profane" writings into their historical matrixes, which are christocentric not in the sense that they interpret events as reflective of some set of specific moral dicta, but rather as illuminative of the basic lesson which Christ left us--we are all one entity. For these three visionaries, the more enlightened works of every epoch point to this central truth, while "Turbat-Vers," which articulates distortive ideologies, seek to deny it. Thus Blake, Hamann, and Boehme are not merely concerned with the works of the adherents of some creed who falsely believe themselves more holy than irreligious wastrels, but rather with expanding the canon of "sacred" literature to include <u>all</u> literature, just as Christ proclaimed the holiness of all humanity.

Boehme, as the epigraph to this chapter exemplifies, believed the Bible to be a coded document whose spiritual content could be deciphered by everyone. For him, this

decodified content constituted a continual exhortation toward the tireless mental "Ringen" with reality that in turn effects the transmogrification of that "given" reality. Indeed, the epigraph itself makes clear that we must grapple with the texts of the Bible itself: the radical essence of Moses' writings might appear initially "ganz verborgen," but imaginative wrestling with the text reveals its true message, its presaging of the egalitarian dawn which will follow the enslaving ignorance of our own times. As he asserts repeatedly in the Morgenroethe, and throughout his entire canon, "Vorgaenge," events, and "Epochen" obtain to significance beyond their own singularties; they are also "Figuren" which we must wrestle with in order to extract their apocalyptic significance. Moreover, we must struggle to reveal their true opposition to the distorting historical ideologies in whose perpetuation they have been enslaved, the "Nacht" of time fallen into the darkness of "Selbheit," whose perpetuators--the church--found Boehme's thought so threatening. All "figures" point towards, as Stoudt phrases it, "the reborn man, in a new body, the production of which is the aim of Boehme's soteriology, [that] again achieves the total human image foretold in scripture" (273).

That "profane" writings also contain soteriological content is evidenced by Boehme's assimilation of

alchemical and astrological terminology, as well as of other esoteric disciplines. From these disciplines he wrested Christocentric truths, asserting that the heavens mirror the inifinite proportions and inextinguishable incandescence of recombinant humanity, and that the quest to wring gold from lead evokes the lustre of a truly egalitarian society, which must be wrought from the base metal of a corrupt feudalism. He pointed these misguided systems forward toward an achievable, much more enriching goal than the forecasting of fate or the achievment of monetary wealth--toward the realization of such an egalitarian society upon the plains of current existence, bringing the heavens down to earth, and all gold up into the daylight of recombinant humanity.

Just as "Vorgaenge" and "Epochen" represent decipherable "Figuren" for Boehme, so does history in all its manifestations constitute, in Hamann's view, "Raethsel," riddles which, as the epipgraph to this chapter evidences, must be imaginatively decoded through the dialectical interaction of the spirits of prophecy and observation. Joergensen illustrates quite well Hamann's essentially syncretic typology:

> [Die Kirche gegenueber] verlangte Hamann die Applikation beim Studium nicht nur der heiligen, sondern auch der profanen Literatur, nicht nur der heiligen, sondern auch der profanen Geschichte, weil sich der Bund Gottes mit dem Menschen...nicht auf Israel und die christliche Kirche beschraenkt, sondern als 'diathetische Ordnung' in der gesamten

> Geshichte, in der gesamten Ueberlierferung verborgen liegt. (33)[13]

Hamann's syncretic tendencies are most clearly evinced in Sokratische Denkwuerdigkeiten, where he asserts the pagan philosopher as the historical antecedent and presager of Christ:

> ...Sokrates lockte seine Mitbuerger aus den Labyrinthen ihrer gelehrten Sophisten zu einer Wahrheit, die im Verborgenen liegt, zu einer heimlichen Weisheit, und von den Goetzenaltaeren ihrer andaechtigen und staatsklugen Priester zum Dienst eines unbekanntes Gottes. (N II, 77)[14]

As I have already indicated in Chapter II, this passage is at one level a justification of Hamann's difficult prose, which in contrast to the sophistic writers of the Enlightenment seeks to point toward that God who lies concealed within us all. Hamann further asserted that "Wer den Sokrates unter den Propheten nicht leiden will, den muss man fragen: Wer der Propheten Vater sey?"

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[13]In contrast to the church, Hamann demanded the application of not only holy, but also profane history in studies, because God's covenant with humanity...is not limited to Israel and the Christian church, but rather lies concealed as a 'diathetic order' in all history and traditio

[14]Socrates led his fellow citizens out of the labyrinths of their learned Sophists to a truth that lies in concealment, to a secret wisdom, and away from the idolatrous altars of their devout and politically wise priests to the service of an unknown God.

(Ibid).[15] Socrates pointed out the falsity of his epoch's dominant ideology--and was sentenced to death for doing so--and simultaneously adumbrated the existence of a totally different God. Hamann himself considered his task as author essentially the same, to rescue history from the altars of natural and mystical history, to reveal the unifying Christian essence that lies just as hidden now, buried by the meretricious obscurantism of doctrinal Christianity and the immaterial abstractions of rationalist dogma, as it did in Socrates' time.

Hamann deepens his syncretic manifesto in Sokratische Denkwuerdigkeiten by asserting that

> Wenn kein junger Sperling ohne unsern Gott auf die Erde faellt; so ist kein Denkmal alter Zeiten fuer uns verloren gegangen....Sollte seine Vorsorge sich nicht ueber Schriften erstrecken, da Er Selbst ein Schriftsteller geworden....Ich meyne also nicht ohne Grund, dass Gott fuer alle Buecher, woran uns was gelegen, wenigstens so viel Aufmerksamkeit getragen als Caesar fuer die beschriebene Rolle, mit der er in die See sprang, oder Paulus fur sein Pergamen zu Troada. (N II, 64)[16]

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[15]Whoever will disallow Socrates as belonging to the prophets, must then ask: Who is the father of the prophets?

[16]If no young sparrow can fall to earth without our God; then there is no monument of ancient times lost for us.... Should His care not encompass writings, since He Himself became an author?.... Thus with good reason I believe that God devotes at least as much attention to all books important to us, as did Caesar to the famous scrolls with which he sprang into the sea, or as did Paul for his parchment at Troas.

This passage not only affirms the central value of "profane" writings for any true historicity, it also reaffirms simultaneously Hamann's commitment to the minute particulars of material existence, in this instance with a particularly historical emphasis. In a radical image, Hamann posits God as himself an author, and by reciprocral implication, authors as God. With brilliant irony, he exemplifies God's concern for all books, all histories, by referring to that arch-nemesis of organized Jewish and Christian religion arch-nemesis and antithesis, Caesar. God is at least as concerned with all writing as Caesar was with the scrolls he held above water while swimming to escape from the siege of Alexandria (Joergensen, SD, 24). Any meaningful historicism can only be achieved through cultural inclusiveness, not sanctified exclusiveness. I would point again to the epigraph; for Hamann we are all capable of becoming "Propheten," authors of apocalyptic history. Thus his assertion of the god-like status of writers in no way implies elitist notions of an alternative priesthood; indeed the creation of "true" works for Hamann would essentially deny such notions as inherently inhuman.

Blake asserts his alignment with such a typological view of history early on in his canon, as a central passage from All Religions are One evinces "The Religions of all Nations are derived from each Nations different

reception of the Poetic Genius which is everywhere call'd the Spirit of Prophecy. The Jewish & Christian Testaments are An original derivation from the Poetic Genius" (1). Besides providing an exact translation of Hamann's "Geist der Weissagung," Blake here argues that all religions--and thereby the historicisms they produce--are permutations of the Poetic Genius' unifying essence, a phrase synonomous with Christ in Blake's lexicon. Jewish and Christian documents truly testify, when read in their "hellish" sense, to the continuous existence of humanity's infinite potential, a potential which may be acted upon at any second. Yet it is the self-appointed task of dogmatic historicisms to obscure that potential and attenuate the radical nature of the Poetic Genius, enslaving it as a sycophantic legitimizer of dominant ideology. In contrast to this typology of oppression, we may look to Blake's typology of liberation, one detailed in what he named "the Bible of Hell" in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell.

Blake delineated this essential contrast perhaps most clearly in the famous conclusion to "The Everlasting Gospel":

> The Vision of Christ that thou dost see
> Is my Visions Greatest Enemy
> Thine has a great hook nose like to thine
> Mine has a snub nose like to mine....
> Thine loves the same world that mine hates
> Thy Heaven doors are my Hell Gates
> Caiphas was in his own Mind
> A benefactor of Mankind
> Both read the Bible day & night

> But thou readst black where I read white.
> (33: 1-14)

The radical essence of Christ has been distorted by the ideologists of doctrinal Christianity, who in substance do not differ from Caiphas. They have created a "Creeping Jesus" as an instrument for perpetuating their oppressively quietist historicisms, which justify as "natural" a world that places "Empire against Art," as Blake was to assert in the Laocoon. The Jesus of false ideology loves this same world of essential injustice that Blake's loathes, and not only passively accepts it as "right," but is one of its main proponents. Both doctrinal ideologists and Blake read the same biblical text, but Blake extracts from it the searing light of social apocalypse, while the former erect the glaciating opacity of purposeful distortion.

Blake, who elsewhere claimed that a world was visible in a grain of sand, and eternity graspable by the human hand, also distances his visionary typology from vague allegory, asserting that "Thou art a Man God is no more/ Thy own humanity learn to adore" (k: 72-73). Thus for him, as for Hamann and Boehme, we must never bypass the "Ding an sich" in order to arrive at some generalizing vision. Full attention must be paid the singularity of each minute particular; otherwise all we achieve is a

blandly homogenous vision detached from the vibrancy of the events and individuals which create it.

Their essentially typological and dialectical perspectives on history led Boehme, Hamann, and Blake to the realization that the egalitarian apocalypse cannot be achieved instantaneously, or spontaneously, through some magical social awakening. In this they parallel closely Marx, who rightly indicted Hegelian philosophy and its Romantic offshoots as totally naive in their belief in such an inexplicable, immediate transmogrification of social structures whose obscuring bulks have been wrought over centuries of accreted historical distortions. Such attitudes promote passivity and disengagement from history, which is postulated as a reified entity with an existence and powers of its own. In the Manifesto, in Capital, indeed throughout his canon, Marx countered that humanity creates its own history, not vice-versa, and that history does not do anything. It cannot promote struggle for it has no existence apart from its production by humanity. The basic danger here is that a humanity which believes mistakenly that history is something which merely happens will never make anything of revolutionary substance happen. Marx realized that for his own epoch, the first step in dismantling the ideologically wrought distortions of the bourgeosie was to politicize individual workers, to make them aware that only unity

will empower them to transform their existences. This awakening to class struggle would by definition require time and effort, and could by no means be adequately effected overnight.

Blake, Hamann, and Boehme delineate, paradoxically, gradually achieved apoclaypses which correspond to a surprising extent with Marx's conceptions of class struggle. Boehme, as we have seen in previous chapters, envisioned history not as something which merely occurs, but as something forged by humanity: progress is relative to every epoch's awareness of this central fact. Unfortunately, that awareness, in Boehme's view, had as yet reached precious few souls. The apocalypse could not be spontaneously achieved by piously awaiting the rapture, when the chosen few will be called up to the firmament, leaving behind their less obedient kindred. As we have seen, this led him to reject the ludicrous dated Parousias of Chiliasm, a philosophy much in vogue at the time. Conversely, the true apocalypse can be effected only when the unwashed masses realize it is theirs to create; corrupt social structures will be altered not by a sudden outbreak of piety or the intercession of some distant God, but instead by the inevitable human impulse that turns away from the narrow caverns of the "Selbheit" to a social awareness achieved through dialectical redefinition of spiritually impoverished historicisms.

Hamann evidences his basic agreement with Marx and Boehme on this point in his conception of the necessary dialectical interaction between the "Geist der Beobachtung" and the "Geist der Weissagung." This interaction must point out that every historical event is created by humanity, and that those actions refer to our origins in complete unity, while simultaneously indicating the extent of our current disjunction. This process of elucidation is not an instantaneous one: the distortions of false ideology are rooted deep in the consciousnesses of its deluded victims. History itself demands extensive revision by the spirit of prophecy before prophecy can be realized. The "Colonien der ausserordentlichen Volks- und Menschenrace sind disiecti membra poetae" which prophecy seeks to recollect (N III, 387). And this recollection can be achieved only when humanity realizes at a collective level the veracity of Hamann's assertion that "Wir sind all faehig, Propheten zu seyn," a realization that cannot occur spontaneously. This lends Hamann's work its distinctive tone of historical urgency: let's get <u>on</u> with it, he exhorts constantly, in order to galvanize his credulous audience from their allotted spaces in the "great" Chain of Being postulated by capitalist ideology. It is only by annihilating the subject-object dualism at the core of this ideology that we can enter fully into

history, realizing that it has no existence apart from our definition of it.

One need look no further than "Night the Ninth" of The Four Zoas for a stunning account of Blake's belief in the inevitable but gradual nature of the egalitarian apocalypse. This apocalypse is effected in the poem not through some mere epiphany, but rather through the fragmented Zoas' final realization--realization achieved through the recognition of the of the pyschic and social destructiveness wrought by their separate pursuit of their own "Selfhoods." And that damage does not evaporate in the face of such a realization. Instead it demands the intense and protracted labor of unified humanity to reclaim the barren soil from capitalist ideologies. As Erdman has indicated, "The process of purgation is a lenghty one, and Judgement Day is a misnomer: it is really Judgement Week, the seven days of Genesis enacted in reverse" (324). Blake here inverts the traditional interpretations of Genesis, which treat the "days" of Genesis as epochs.

And importantly, this process is an extension of the recognition--at last--by the Zoas that their collective existence is immersed in the material world, and their own alienation from that world and each other a constructed delusion, as a key passage from "Night the Eighth" reveals: "So Man looks out in tree & herb & fish & bird &

beast/ Collecting up the scatterd portions of his immortal body" (110: 6-7).

This turning outwards to the material world, described in diction strikingly reminiscent of Hamann's "disiecti membra poetae," leads to the visionary reclamation and transmogrification of the material world which "Night the Ninth" articulates so forcefully. Significantly, Los indicates just how deeply he acknowledges the importance of material existence and its transformation, for he "his vegetable hands/ Outstretched his right hand branching out in fibrous Strength/ Siezd the Sun. His left hand like dark roots coverd the Moon/ And tore them down cracking the heavens across from immense to immense" (117: 6-9). This passage indicates that the true apocalypse must be corporeal as well as spiritual, and Los begins the gradual process of Parousia by first discovering that history, that time and space as humanity views them now are constructed. Thus Los rips down this false pattern of history--time as proffered by the false mechanical sun that is Urizen and the moon that is Luvah. This wholesale destruction of the historical framework of false ideology starts "forth the trembling millions into flames of mental fire/ Bathing their limbs in the bright visions of Eternity," lines recounted twice, pages 118: 18-19, and 119: 22-23). The Sons of Urizen, who as we have seen earlier turned the instruments of joy into "Instruments of

Death," are redeemed in the ensuing struggle, and they in turn deepen Blake's commitment to the necessity of a gradual transformation of both material and spiritual labor. They not only refurbish "the Harrow of the Almighty" stolen by Urizen in order to effect the imaginative harrowing of the material world (M 7:10), they also "throw away/ The spear the bow the gun the mortar," and "forge the spade the mattock & the ax," underscoring Blake's belief in the reclamation of human existence as inescapably a time-consuming process of material labor. Blake thus abjures false Romantic notions of an apocalypse achievable through some sort of intellectual hat-trick.

This process is carried on for the duration of the astounding "Night the Ninth," leading to the attainment of a final recombinant vision by the "disiecti membra poetae" of a once self-engrossed humanity:

> In families we see our shadows born. & thence we know
> That Man subsists by Brotherhood & Universal Love
> We fall on one anothers necks more closely we embrace
> Not for ourselves but for the Eternal family we live
> Man liveth not by Self alone but in his brother's face. (133: 22-26)

Such a unity, based in human integration achieved upon the plains of material existence, should indicate as well the distance between the visions of the ultimate social totality evinced by Blake, Hamann, and Boehme, and those

of the pure idealists with whom they are so frequently lumped. As I have already argued at some length in Chapter III, these artists refuted such immaterial, escapist commonplaces, asserting instead of some envisioned static solace in realms of pure thought the necessity of a dynamic, heterogenous totality grounded in the transformed material world. The processes of dialectical clarification are not transcended within such a totality, but, conversely, intensified. Differentation will here no longer be equatable with disjunction, and the vibrant diversity of material phenomena will be continually elucidated as its essential unity is progressively affirmed.

Yet critics continue to relegate Boehme, Hamann, and Blake to the pale of pure idealism, where totalizing alternatives are based upon a synthetized unity in which this vibrant heterogeneity is homogenized in the name of equality, a unity achieved in some ethereal realm removed from generative existence. Again, Punter's assertion concerning Boehme in this regard constitutes the most glaring example; Punter maintains that "the transcendence of thought and the world [for Blake and Hegel] is not portrayed, as in Boehme, as a removal of humanity to a divine plane--the world is the divine plane" (168). I assent to Punter's analysis of Blake here, and only wish he had extended it to Boehme. Boehme did not, as we have

seen, postulate the necessity of some "endless oscillation" between good and evil as necessary, as Punter maintains. Instead he envisioned the necessary act of intellectual "Ringen" as progressing towards a definite goal--the transformation of "Ringen" into "Spiel" or play, perpetuating dialectical activity, but stripping away the torture which accompanies the visionary warring with social injustice and replacing it with the delightful dynamicism of the totally egalitarian society achievable through that intellectual struggle.

Hans Grunsky provides a perceptive corrective to Punter's assertions, contending that at a certain stage in Boehme's dialectical process of history

> es sich jetzt nicht mehr um den erbitterten Kampf sich widersprechenden Qualitaeten handelt, sondern um ihre Vereinigung in einem bewegten, aber harmonischen Spiel.... Spiel ist bei Boehme zentraler Begriff. Denn er geht auf den Sinngehalt des Seins.... So entfaltet er seine volle Bedeutung doch erst im Bereich der sich offenbarenden Kraefte, und zwar nicht zuletzt durch die charakteristische Verbindung von Ringen und Spielen. Man kann geradezu formulieren, Spiel... sei fuer Boehme verwandelter, naemlich von einem Gegen--zu einem Miteinander gewordener Streit.... im Freudenreich ist der Streit 'aufgehoben....' (182-183)[17]

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[17]it is no longer concerned with the embittered struggle between self-contradictory qualities, but rather with their unification in a dynamic but harmonious 'play'.... Play is for Boehme a central concept because it concerns the meaning of being. But this meaning reveals its full content only in the region of the self-revelatory energies, and indeed not least of all in the characteristic connection between wrestling and play. One can thus formulate that play represents for Boehme a

That this "Freudenreich" is grounded in the material world, and that it is defined by conjoinment, not conflation, Boehme makes clear in a central quotation from Von der Gnadenwahl: "Wir sollen uns wegen der ungleichen Gaben nicht verfolgen, sondern vielmeher in der Liebe untereinander erfreuen... wie die schoenen Blumen... nebeneinander in einer Mutter sich erfreuen" (21:18).[18] He further asserts his committment to material existence in the Morgenroethe: "Nun aber stehet in beiden, in der Erde und auch in deinem Fleische das Licht der klaren Gottheit verborgen, und bricht durch und gebaeret ihm einem Leib nach jedes Leibes Art" (22:68).[19] Here Boehme refutes forcefully those critics who would brand him an immaterial mystic. Far from being merely idealistic, he asserts that his "Freudenreich" is not static, nor merely oscillatory, but infused with a historically progressive, harmonious dynamism; that it is not ethereal, but firmly grounded in corporeal reality, in flesh and soil; that it is not a homogenous synthesis, but a joyous apotheosis of the generative world's heterogeneity, one in which

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strife which has been transformed from opposition against into cooperation with one another. In the realm of joy struggle is removed, disappeared....

[18]"We should not persecute one another because of our unequal gifts, but rather rejoice together in love...as the lovely flowers....rejoice next to one another in one mother."

[19]But there exists hidden within both the earth and your flesh the light of the translucent Godhead, and this breaks through and bears one body after the type of all bodies.

individual beauty is not sacrificed to our common identity as social entities. The divergent paths of our ascendant beauty are rooted in the soil of our essentially unified beginnings.

This firm commitment to the construction of a "Freudenreich" within material reality is mirrored by Hamann as well. Indeed, the very notion of an "Urkorrespondenz" defeats coalescence, asserting instead a conjoinment in which individual identity is retained. But even more strikingly, Hamann affirms his belief in a dynamic heaven and parallels Blake simultaneously by asserting in "Ein fliegender Brief" that "der heiligen Stadt prophetischer Name theils das eiserne Schicksal ihrer irdischen Vergangenheit, theils die Goldberge und Diamentenhuegel einer laengst erwunschten und erwarteten Zukunft [bezeichnet]" (N III, 389-90). [20] Hamann evinces thus an essentially dialectical view of Jerusalem, opposing the iron destiny of its past with the gleaming possibilities of its future. The "Geist der Weissagung" and "Geist der Beobachtung" must wring from these oppositions some meaningful context for the present. And any such context must contain, not flee or ignore, these polarities. Wild asserts that for Hamann "in Jerusalem

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[20] "the holy city's prophetic name signifies on one side the iron destiny of its earthly past, on the other the mountains of gold and hills of diamonds of a long-desired and expected future."

also die Verheissung der Parusie [liegt]. Jerusalem ist die vergangene Stadt und die von Johannes verkuendigte himmlische Stadt der Offenbarung" (197).[21] This vision of a heaven that is an extension of human civilization is but the logical conclusion of Hamann's emphasis upon the necessity of material existence for any meaningful vision: the spirit of prophecy, the "poetisches Genie," divorced from the five "Gerstenbrodte" of the senses, historical patterns which exclude the messages of the past and the promises of the future--thus negating the revolutionary potential of the present--all point out the inevitability of an essentially social, inveterately dynamic paradise.

Hamann's high estimation of the ebullient multiplicity of material phenomena disallows the doctrinal Christian notion of a heaven where nothing happens, where the static vision and complete disengagement lauded by capitalist ideologies are apotheosized. Any city, even a "heavenly" one, demands constant maintenance and renewal, and we can be sure that Hamann saw this as fitted to the human existence. Finally, a pregnant passage from Biblische Betrachtungen underscores Hamann's basic commitment to the material world and to its transformation through the process of human history:

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[21]In Jerusalem, therefore, is contained the covenant of the Parousia. Jerusalem is the past city and also that heavenly city of revelation prophesied by John.

> Macht euch die Erde Unterthan: Seid Goetter derselben, erhaltet die Heiligkeit auf eurer Welt. Behauptet eure Herrschaft in der Wuerde--wir koennen uns nicht selbst vergessen, ohne Gott zu schaenden. Gott machte den Menschen zum Herrn der ganzen Erde. (N I, 13-14)[22]

Here we see a dialectical materialism that anticipates Marx's own and stands in the starkest contrast to the idealist, intuitive mystics among whom Hamann is commonly numbered. It is only through the subjugation of the material world--not its cancellation--that humanity may realize its true destiny. History is the process of this developing mastery. We must become gods of the world; idealist attempts to escape this active destiny transform humanity into slaves of the environment we should rightfully dominate. Such passivity is antithetical to our essentially dynamic natures: this is sin for Hamann, to forget our basic identities as creative entities and thus to blaspheme the God who is us. No such God could ever be satisfied with a heaven of static pastoralism.

Blake repeatedly exemplifies his concurrence with the dynamic visions of paradise evinced by Boehme and Hamann, yet he too has been indicted for his supposedly homogenous vision of a truly egalitarian society. The best example

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[22]Make the earth your servant: be gods of the same, preserve the sanctity in your world. Maintain your mastery in dignity--we cannot forget ourselves, without harming God. God made humanity masters of the entire world.

of this general tendency is offered by David Aers, who asserts that

> The whole vocabulary of humanity in 'One Man'...[is] a recipe for the destruction of the spontaneous forms of creative life to which Blake's work is dedicated to a vision which substitutes a world of generalized symbols and abstractions for the human world of concrete individuals and historical existence which Blake explains so magnificently in the body of his work. We see the closure of the dramatic interaction of human relationships and history and the substitutions of a cycle of emanation and return...which dissolves all human identity into undifferentiated unity. (42-43)

Aers here makes essentially the same mistaken assessment of Blake's final totalizing vision as did Punter in regard to Boehme. Punter fails to address the definite progressiveness inherent in Boehme's notions of the eventual replacement of "Ringen" with "Spiel" and the concomitant transformation of the material world into a "Freudenreich." Similarly, Aers equates Blake's recombinant vision with those of sheer idealism, in which diversity is transmuted into uniformity, dynamism into mere placidity. As I have already asserted in Chapter III, nothing could be further from the true nature of Blake's alternative vision. Indeed, analyses such as Aers' seem more intent on establishing under the banner of "essence/phenomena idealists" an "undifferentiated unity" of writers who evince even the most superficial appearance of the critical tags associated with such thought.

Such assessments are totally refuted by even a cursory analysis of the magnificent Plate 98 which climaxes Jerusalem, exemplifying the essential dynamicism and heterogeneity of Blake's vision of an egalitarian society. We have already seen in "Night the Ninth" of The Four Zoas that such a society is not realized through a snap of the fingers, but by transforming material history with the plow, spade, mattock, and ax. Plate 98 details the nature of that hard-won society, immediately asserting its highly differentiated unity: here "the innumerable Chariots of the Almighty appeard in Heaven/ And Bacon & Newton & Locke, & Milton & Shakespear & Chaucer" (9-10). Here the "two classes of men" Blake asserted as irreconcilable in The Marriage of Heaven and Hell are conjoined but not dissolved into some bland harmony, as the structure of the second line makes explicit. The three rationalists are separated not only by an ampersand from the three visionary artists, but also by a comma, implying a differentation inherent in their unification. Blake does not merely negate the rationalist dogma he so loathed but integrates it into his dissilient vision of a truly social existence.

It is not by reconciling and thus etiolating these opposed men that Blake's heaven is achieved, but by bringing them into a dialectical alignment. Moreover, we can see how inappropriate are assertions such as this:

> In the end Blake cannot truly reconcile contraries because, like the Puritans whose moral intensity he shares, he can only solve the problem by exclusion or casting out: sheep and goats. (Damrosch, 242).

The crucial error here is the use of the verb "reconcile," a Coleridgean term which Blake never employs; Blake never "truly reconciles" contraries because he does not desire to do so. Neither does he solve this "dilemma" by a philosophy of exclusion, as his inclusion of the once loathed Bacon, Newton, and Locke in his heaven manifests. He recognizes, with a sober realism, the contrary nature of material phenomena, and seeks to <u>align</u> those phemonmena through an <u>inclusive</u> process of imaginative reclamation.

The nature of this dialectical alignment is further detailed when Blake asserts that recombinant humanity "walked/ To & fro in Eternity as One Man reflecting each in each & clearly seen and seeing: according to fitness & order" (39-40). How can anything be "clearly seen" in a world of undifferentiated unity? Dynamicism and specificity are inherent in these lines: Blake's assertion that humanity is now contained in "One Man" does not imply a "world of generalized symbols and abstractions" any more than does Marx's conception of one global society in which all social disjunction is dissolved. The dissolution of injustice does not mandate the loss of individual diversity. These lines make clear that within the "One Man" are individuals walking hither and yon,

reflecting "each in each" other, clearly perceiving and distinctly perceived.

Blake intensifies this essential dynamicism by asserting the continual dialectical modification which will typify this paradise, asserting that "Humanity Divine" is

> going forward forward irresistible from Eternity to Eternity
> And they conversed together in Visionary Forms Dramatic which bright
> Redounded from their Tongues in thunderous majesty, in Visions
> In new Expanses, creating exemplars of Memory and Intellect
> Creating Space, Creating Time, according to the wonders Divine
> Of Human Imagination.... (26-30)

I do not wish to belabor the obvious here, but there can be little dispute that a conversation cannot be carried on by undifferentiated non-entities. This passage also indicates that it is precisely not the "closure of the dramatic interaction of human relationships and history" which Aers asserts Blake constructs in his paradise, but rather communication in "Visionary Forms Dramatic," the apotheosis of Marx's notion of speech as "practical consciousness" (Williams, 59). Moreover, Blake does not posit a static eternity, but a dialectical eternality in which humanity proceeds ever forward, constantly redefining and improving the quality of the egalitarian society achieved by the overthrow of empire. Most

importantly, however, humanity has finally realized that history is a human construct, not a reified entity--a crucial step for any true social progress, according to Marx--and begins "Creating Time" according to its own enlightened dictates, throwing off the yoke of ideological historicisms. Blake's notion of a dynamic, egalitarian, heterogenous eternality is no more mystical or naive than Marx's vision of an inevitable, perfectly equal society achievable by humanity.

In their notions of a primal unity between God and humanity Blake, Hamann, and Boehme evince an essential opposition to the Marxian concept of asocial "pre-history" as a negative which is in no way desirable. Yet this postulated primal unity does not align these artists with regressive Romantics such as Novalis, who longed for times "Wenn nicht mehr Figuren und Zahlen...." would exist. It is useless, destructive to long for those wonderful, wonderful times before humanity complicated existence by developing figures and numbers. These visionaries' belief in such a pre-historical unity leads them not to reactionary historicism but rather to the creation of progessive historicities. The ultimate goal of these historicities is the achievement of a recombinant society which reflects that lost unity but, ironically, is superior to it. Humanity had to "fall" into asocial, alienated existence in order to become fully aware of the

nature of social, integrated life. Moreover, the reachievement of this egalitarian mode of existence--the "Freudenreich," Jerusalem--is further enhanced by the experiential knowledge of the material world's vibrant diversity. That heterogeneity must infuse any subsequently achieved "paradise."

In their essentially dialectical views of history, in their assertion of everyone as a prophet, in their emphasis upon a gradual yet inevitable advancement toward a truly just social reality, Blake, Hamann, and Boehme evince similar yet highly singular attacks upon the destructive effects of false historical ideologies. That their historicities are essentially christocentric reveals not so much the perpetuation of conventionally ideological religiosity, as a rejection of the "Creeping Jesus" created by doctrinal Christianity. Their Christ proffered a sword with which we might smite down the delusions of false history, a sword taken up by Blake, Hamann, and Boehme and wielded with devastating efficiency in their works.

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